

20th September, 2011

Communications Department
Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230/1299

communications@ruh.nhs.uk
www.ruh.nhs.uk

Media Release

Carers in the spotlight at RUH

Carers have been sharing their moving stories with staff from across the RUH as part of a drive to improve patient and carer experiences at the hospital.

The event called 'See it my way – life as a carer', was well received by staff and was described as a "fascinating reality check" by Head of Patient Experience, Theresa Hegarty.

Six carers were invited to speak. They represented a wide range of experience; the younger wife of a husband with early onset dementia; a daughter with learning difficulties caring for her older parents; the mother of a son with a long term condition; a 17-year-old daughter caring for her parents; the husband of a wife with dementia and the wife of a disabled husband.

Teenager Leanne Roberts looks after her father Ray, who was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis three years ago. She told staff: "I really wanted you to know that you don't get much of a childhood when you care for a parent. I wish I could do more to help my Dad. No-one really understands how you feel when you are a carer."

Mary Allen, who cares for her disabled husband Roy, also spoke at the event which was attended by more than 60 staff. Mary says: "I wanted to stress to staff that carers know their patients better than anyone else, and that it is useful to involve us. What we need is help and comfort, not to be made to feel we are in the way."

Theresa says: "The purpose of the event was to raise awareness and understanding amongst RUH staff of the experience and needs of local carers, through the carers themselves - telling us their story. The speakers were all carers who spoke with eloquence and exceptional clarity. The auditorium was packed and no-one failed to be moved. The hour-long session was inspiring, relevant and valuable to all RUH staff. Feedback has been amazing."

She adds: "It is so important to get a deeper insight into the daily life of a carer. We will all come into contact with carers, and most patient care involves communicating and working with carers. The number of people who are carers is increasing rapidly and the needs of people who are carers is recognised as a national priority."

Theresa organised the event working in close partnership with staff at the Carers Centre Bath and North East Somerset. The centre is the leading provider of support, advice, breaks away from caring, and influential lobbying, for people who regularly support someone who is frail, has a physical or mental illness, disability or problem with drugs or alcohol. For more information about the centre, call 01761 431388.

'See it my way' is a special series where people tell their own story direct to staff. Previous popular sessions have included 'living with dementia' and the next event, planned for later this year, will be 'living with a terminal illness'.

Ends

Notes to editors:

There are six million carers in the UK, providing unpaid support to those in need – saving the treasury £87 billion a year.

Some 1.2 million carers – one in five – spend more than 50 hours a week caring for others.

Over 80 per cent of carers say their caring role has had a detrimental affect on their health.

The number of carers in the UK is set to rise to over 13 million over the next decade.

Some three million carers juggle work alongside their caring responsibilities.

The area of Bath and North East Somerset has 16,225 carers – many of whom do not realise the range of help and support available to them.

Photo:

Press release comes with photograph. The picture caption reads: Carers in the spotlight at the 'See it my way - life as a Carer' event at the RUH.

L-R Carer Jim Lingard, Theresa Hegarty, Head of Patient Experience, plus carers Leanne Roberts, Elizabeth Hayward, Mary Allen and Isabella Spotswood.