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## Media Release

### Sir Tony Robinson launches £200k Volunteer Dementia Project

Actor, historian, presenter and advocate of dementia care Sir Tony Robinson joined the Forever Friends Appeal, their guests and RUH staff to mark the launch of the innovative Volunteer Dementia Project.

The Medlock Charitable Trust has generously donated £100,000 towards the three year project and the Forever Friends Appeal aims to raise additional funds to ensure that patients with dementia are able to further benefit from volunteer care and support. Volunteers already make an enormous difference to dementia patients on our specialist older peoples' wards, spending time with them and helping them engage in meaningful activities. Over three years the Volunteer Dementia Project will provide an estimated 160 volunteer placements and 4,800 hours of care to patients with dementia,

At the launch event, Sir Tony Robinson said:

"I'm delighted to be a part of this launch; I hope this project will take the lead and encourage other district general hospitals to provide similar services for patients suffering from dementia. It is such a debilitating disease and this new service should make a real difference to patients and their loved ones when they come into hospital."

A coordinator employed by the Alzheimer's Society will organise a volunteer befriending service and a number of activities to increase mental and physical stimulation to improve patient wellbeing. Interactive reminiscence room pods, set up in familiar environments such as a traditional 1950s sitting room and a retro kitchen will be used to engage with dementia patients as they have a calming and relaxing effect. Bedside personalisation such as photos, ornaments placed on patients' bedsides will be provided and a programme of creative activities such as knitting, reading and drawing will be included by the hospital's arts charity, Art at the Heart. RUH, Consultant Geriatrician and project lead Dr Chris Dyer said:

"By combining our knowledge and expertise with our project partners, it will help develop this programme and really test out its value in caring for patients with dementia. The three year Volunteer Dementia Project will help us pilot and research the need for longer term work in this area, and hopefully also provide a blueprint for a future national model of care."

Tim Hobbs, Head of Fundraising for The Forever Friends Appeal said:

"We are pleased to have secured the core funding to go ahead with the Volunteer Dementia Project and are particularly indebted to The Medlock Charitable Trust for their early and significant support that has underpinned the fundraising effort.

"This is an opportunity to take the lead and set a new standard for dementia care in hospitals such as the RUH. The pilot is funded by our supporters, and to our knowledge, there is no other project

like this in the UK. Working with our project partners and with Dr Chris Dyer taking the lead, we hope this will be a successful initiative which, with public support, will be able to further expand.”

The Forever Friends Appeal is now working to raise additional funds and expand the project to reach more patients with dementia at the RUH. For information about supporting the project, visit the Forever Friends Appeal website or contact Project Support Officer Rosie Scott on 01225 826431. Anyone interested in volunteering for the project are welcome to contact Volunteer Coordinator, Brogan Knight on 07702 108 994 or email: [Brogan.Knight@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:Brogan.Knight@alzheimers.org.uk) for more details.

## **Ends**

### **Notes to editor:**

- The Forever Friends Appeal is the primary charity for the RUH and raises funds to provide state-of-the-art equipment and facilities
- The Forever Friends Appeal and the RUH Dementia Care Service are working with key partners: The Alzheimer’s Society, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership and Research Institute for Care of the Elderly (RICE) to help improve treatment and care for patients with dementia.
- The Dementia Care Service is working with the Alzheimer’s Society to recruit an experienced and qualified, full time, side-by-side coordinator Brogan Knight. Brogan will source and manage volunteers from the local community. All volunteers will undergo the appropriate safeguarding procedures and training including DBS checks.
- The Research Institute for Care of the Elderly (RICE) will research and evaluate the project and outcomes and will be presented to highlight any need to expand the project and to secure more sustainable funding.
- The Forever Friends Appeal is also planning to develop a new major campaign over the coming months that are focused on the aim of the RUH to be a leading Dementia Friendly Hospital. This new campaign will sit alongside work that they are already undertaking to complete the fundraising for the new Cancer Centre, and the Brownsword Match Funding Challenge for the new RNHRD & Therapies Centre.
- RICE is an internationally renowned dementia research and treatment centre located on the RUH site. Dr Dyer is also the Chairman of the RICE Board and will ensure that the volunteer dementia project works alongside RICE to research our programme linked with patients’ wellbeing.
- For more information about the Forever Friends Appeal visit: [www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk](http://www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk)