

PRESS RELEASE

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**NHS NORTH SOMERSET URGES PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT DYING
MATTERS**

We need to talk more about dying, death and bereavement with our families, friends and loved ones. That's the message underpinning **Dying Matters Week.(May 16 – May 20)**. And NHS North Somerset is urging everyone to mark the week by speaking to friends and loved ones about their own wishes when it comes to the end of their lives.

“Talking about how and where we die is one of the last taboos”, explained Ann Clark, NHS North Somerset’s Lead End of Life Care Facilitator.

We hope that during this week, people will think about what constitutes a ‘good death’. It is not something which only concerns elderly or terminally ill people. If we all take time to think about what we would like for our own deaths and that of the people we love, it will help everyone achieve a good death when the time comes” Throughout Dying Matters week, Ann and her team will be staging exhibitions in libraries, social clubs and medical centres across North Somerset while the Curzon cinema will run a week-long ad campaign.

She added: “We are keen for people to initiate conversations with parents, partners and loved ones. It has been interesting to see the differing reactions to people when they see our stand and talk to us, Most people are glad to have the opportunity to express their views. A few people have been quite hostile to the idea, but that is understandable and natural. Fear is what prevents a lot of us from doing so.

“Often, though, elderly people or terminally ill people may be keen to express their own wishes about how and where they wish to die but are prevented from doing so as the people closest to them understandably shy away from the thought of their death. It is important to remember that talking about this does not make it happen but it *can* help ensure that people receive the care they want in the place they want to be, at the end of their lives.”

Dying Matters Week is co-ordinated nationally by The Dying Matters Coalition – an organisation set up by the National Council for Palliative Care and including in its membership organisations from the health and care sectors, community groups, social care, faith groups and the legal profession,

Research conducted by the Coalition revealed that while 70% of people would prefer to die at home, more than 60% still die in hospital. In North Somerset, there is a steady fall in the numbers of people dying in hospital.

It is an indication, says Clare-Louise Nicholls, NHS North Somerset programme manager, older people, that the PCT, working with partners such as Marie Curie Cancer Care and Age UK, is helping people express their wishes about how and where they wish to die,

“Since April of last year we have seen a 6% drop in deaths in an acute hospital with a corresponding increase in deaths in the community”, she said. “The most noticeable change is in the number of people who are dying in their care home – an increase of 4% since last year. This is a tribute to care home staff in North Somerset who have raised the issue among their colleagues and their residents and have supported those residents achieve their preferred place of care at the end. “

NHS North Somerset has also worked closely with Marie Curie Cancer Care since 2008 to redesign end of life care services in North Somerset via its ‘Delivering Choice Programme’. A key focus for this are the wishes of people who are terminally ill concerning their deaths and the programme supports people in making an informed choice about their preferred place of care at the end of their life and to achieve that choice,

Added Clare-Louise” That is helping to reverse the percentage of people dying in acute hospitals compared to their own home, “

A recent opinion poll commissioned by Marie Curie Cancer Care revealed that 68% of those questioned said they would prefer to die in their own home while only 18% expressed a preference for dying in hospital.

According to the Dying Matters Coalition, of which NHS North Somerset is a member, less than a third (29%) of people have discussed their wishes around dying and only 4% have written advance care plans.

As part of its joint working with Marie Curie, NHS North Somerset has established an End of Life Co-ordination Centre to provide co-ordinated care and support services for terminally ill patients, their carers and families. Based in Weston, it is a single point of access telephone centre led by a community Nurse. And a continuing health care fast track coordinator has joined the team to support the assessment process and help develop effective care plans for people nearing the end of their lives.

The Centre enables health professionals to make a referral by making a call to Care Connect. The centre can arrange extra care or contact Medequip to arrange delivery of medical equipment, specialist beds and mattresses which they will collect once the equipment is no longer needed.

It all adds up to a coordinated service involving a range of people from the public, voluntary and independent sectors and will provide choice for people across North Somerset who would prefer to die at home surrounded by their family and Online advice and information about care and support services for people living with terminal illness is already available for anyone living in North Somerset via a website developed in collaboration with Marie Curie Cancer Care and launched earlier this year.

Website www.nssomersetendoflifecare.nhs.uk) now provides a helpful one stop point of access for information on everything from the symptoms of long term illness, to advance care planning and even how to raise the subject of terminal illness with children and family members.

- ENDS -

Notes to editors

The Dying Matters Awareness Week will take place from **16-22 May 2011**. It's theme this year is "Why dying matters to me. In North Somerset Ann Clark and her team from the End-of-Life Co-ordination centre have begun a programme of visits and exhibitions to coincide with Dying Matters Week.

12th May **Weston Library** 10am - 12.30
16th May **Clevedon Medical Centre** 9am – 12md
17th May **Locking Castle Medical Centre** 9am - 11.30
18th May **Healthy Living Centre** 9am - 12md
18th May **Clevedon Yeo Rotary Club** 7.30 - 10.30 after dinner speaker
19th May **Tower House Medical Centre** 12.30 - 17.00
20th May **Academy Weston Hosp.** 12.00-15.00 awareness event for staff

In addition All staff working for NHS North Somerset will have a Dying Matters information leaflet “Putting your house in order”, which looks at 5 things that you can plan for end of life, distributed with their pay slip in May.

About Dying Matters

- Dying Matters is a broad based coalition set up by the National Council for Palliative Care (NCPC) to raise public awareness of dying, death and bereavement, to support the implementation of the Government’s End of Life Care Strategy.
- The Dying Matters Coalition mission is to promote awareness and support changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards dying, death and bereavement, and through this to make a ‘good death’ the norm.
- Everybody - whatever their age or state of health – needs to talk about their wishes towards the end of life with their friends, families and loved ones.

- The Dying Matters Coalition has over 14,000 members with an interest in supporting changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards dying, death and bereavement. This includes organisations from across the NHS and the voluntary and independent health and care sectors, including hospices, care homes, charities supporting old people, children and bereavement.
- NHS North Somerset is the local Primary Care Trust for North Somerset. The trust was established in April 2002 to ensure the provision of the highest quality healthcare services to the residents of North Somerset. It was recently assessed as one of the most improved PCTs in England by the Care Quality Commission.

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