

PRESS RELEASE

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DEMENTIA AWARENESS WEEK

A sponsored abseil at Uphill quarry, Weston super Mare and a manned stand at Waitrose in Nailsea to advise anyone worried about their memory, are among activities planned across North Somerset to mark Dementia Awareness Week. (July 4-9)

NHS North Somerset is also using the week to highlight its memory service and the help and support it can provide for people concerned about their memory and who believe it is affecting their day to day life,

There are currently 1375 people diagnosed with dementia living in North Somerset. Given the area's growing elderly population both the Alzheimer's Society and NHS North Somerset believe that figure is set to rise sharply by 2020. Explained PCT Commissioning Manager Susie McMullen, "We work closely with the Alzheimer's Society at local level to ensure that anyone with concerns about their long or short term memory knows where to seek help. NHS North Somerset and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust have also worked together with the local care community to ensure that our dementia assessment (memory) services provide dementia assessment, diagnosis and interventions for everyone requiring a service in North Somerset "

The Memory Service consists of specialist memory nurses, psychologists, doctors, therapists and support workers and is designed for people who are concerned about their memory and believe it is affecting their day to day life. :

Bob Welsh, Team Leader of the North Somerset Memory Service, commented, "By helping individuals to understand the cause of their memory problem and any likely future changes, we hope to enable them to deal with things more confidently, helping them to understand and find ways to manage their situation. Information and support is provided in a format that suits the individual and is also to carers and family. It is important that anyone concerned about their memory visits their GP first to discuss their concerns. There are many medical conditions that can affect memory and these need to be diagnosed and treated first. Once the doctor has checked for any easily treatable causes, they can then request a specialist assessment from our service."

NHS North Somerset has also provide funding which the Alzheimer's Society will use to run a series of awareness events to promote the message '*Worried About Your Memory?*'. The first of these takes place on 6 July at the Nailsea branch of Waitrose and will continue throughout the summer and autumn at venues across North Somerset.

The stand will be manned by trained dementia support workers and supported by volunteers who can advise on dementia symptoms and reassure people who might be experiencing normal forgetfulness from time to time. Explained Hazel Tillman, the Society's North Somerset Co-ordinator,"These events aim to raise awareness of memory problems and ensure that anyone who is worried visits their GP's. We also want GP's to be aware of memory problems in patients as possible indications of dementia."

She added: "Early diagnosis can help people with dementia and their carers access the medical and social care to which they are entitled and enable them to make important decisions affecting their future.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- 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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