

**DEMENTIA FOCUS**

**Neil Hunt to leave post as chief executive of Alzheimer's Society**

Neil Hunt has left his post as chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society. Chief operating officer Ruth Sutherland will become acting chief executive until a replacement is appointed. Mr Hunt said that, after nearly seven years in the role, it was time to seek new challenges.

"The dementia agenda has changed beyond all recognition in recent years," said Mr Hunt. "No longer will this condition be ignored in the way it once was. I am confident that as a health priority we see a new determination to address the challenges it brings to individuals, families and to us all as a nation."



Neil Hunt

Alzheimer's Society chair Alastair Balls said Mr Hunt had made a tremendous contribution to the Alzheimer's Society and to people living with dementia.

"The National Dementia Strategy for England and the similar plans for Wales and Northern Ireland are testament to his outstanding energy and vision," said Mr Balls. "The whole Society wishes him well in his next role."

**Burns appointed to oversee dementia care in England**

A psychiatry professor has been appointed to oversee how dementia is dealt with in England.

Professor Alistair Burns will lead the National Dementia Strategy, launched one year ago by then health secretary Alan Johnson. His job is to promote better care of people with dementia within the NHS and social care communities in England.



Prof. Alistair Burns

"In the past few years, there has been a great deal of public interest in dementia and several influential initiatives, in particular the National Dementia Strategy," said Prof. Burns.

"The challenge now is to build on this to make a real positive difference to people with dementia, their families and carers. I very much look forward to working with colleagues to realise this ambition."

Prof. Burns is currently professor of old age psychiatry at the University of Manchester and Manchester Academic Health Science Centre. He developed the South Manchester Memory Clinic which provides specialist assessment and diagnosis for people with memory problems, and also helped establish a drug treatment clinic.

Ruth Sutherland, chief operating officer for the Alzheimer's Society, has welcomed Prof. Burns' appointment, which comes in the wake of a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) which criticised dementia services in England for not getting the priority they were promised.

**Number of sufferers revised upwards**

Statistics in a University of Oxford report commissioned by the Alzheimer's Research Trust suggest there are now 820,000 people in the UK with dementia, an increase of 120,000 on the previously figure of 700,000.

Released a year after the publication of the National Dementia Strategy for England, the research also suggests that the cost of dementia to the UK economy is £23 billion per year - more than cancer (two times more), heart disease (three times more) and stroke (four times more). Spending on dementia research is shown to be

12 times lower than for cancer. The Alzheimer's Society has described the report as a "timely reminder of the colossal dementia challenge facing the country."

"We can no longer afford for dementia to be the poor relation when it comes to health issues," said a spokesman.

"With the appropriate investment dementia can be defeated. Ahead of the general election, all political parties must wake up to the human and economic cost of this devastating condition."

**'Virtual dementia' tour wins training award**

Health and social care charity PSS has won an award for the training it gives to those who help people with dementia.

The Liverpool-based organisation's "virtual dementia" tour was one of the training tools which caught the eye of judges, along with the PSS online dementia centre.

The tour simulates what it can be like to have dementia, helping carers and professionals understand what the person they are looking after is going through. PSS was voted Britain's best provider of learning and development by Skills for Care - which monitors the training of people in this sector. Sharon McFarlane, from Knowsley Health and Social Care Partnership, who nominated PSS for the award, said: "We

supported this training with funding in the early stages of its development and felt it deserved this award," said Ms McFarlane.

"The feedback from carers who had been through it was excellent. This award is testimony to the positive impact it has had."

The Skills for Care judgment said: "PSS's exciting, innovative and sophisticated approach to dementia training is executed to a high standard. Judges were impressed by use of the Virtual Dementia Tour, involvement of service users, online support of the internet café and focus on behaviour change. The way they describe what they do is tremendously authentic and the model would be of great interest to other training providers."

**Anne can help create a slideshow of memories**



Happy personal photographs and loved music have, separately, long been useful elements of reminiscence therapy for people with dementia. Anne Forrest of Memories UK Ltd says the two can be put together, with care workers creating 'Life Story Slideshows' on a computer.

"To create a Life Story Slideshow you need to concentrate on the storylines of happy times," said Ms Forrest.

Details of how to compile a slideshow are available free of charge (but donations to Age Concern are appreciated) by emailing af@memories-unlimited.co.uk and head "Tips".

Ms Forrest is approaching universities to undertake research into Life Story Slideshows and hopes to receive feedback from people who have compiled and used them as part of reminiscence therapy.

"When people have completed a slide show and shown the finished product it would be really helpful if they get in touch with their comments," said Ms Forrest.

**■ Anne Forrest can be contacted on Tel: 01962 855575, Email: af@memories-unlimited.co.uk, and website www.memories-unlimited.co.uk**



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