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Where there's wool there's a way to help dementia patients

Since it was founded in 1949, The League of Friends of South Tyneside Hospitals has raised hundreds of thousands of pounds to buy extra medical equipment and comforts for patients.

Now, in the League's 67th year, members have gone back to where it all started – by picking up their knitting needles. In the beginning they knitted bed socks for patients, this time around they are providing hand muffs to support the care of those with dementia. Various items are added to the knitted bands, including buttons, ribbons and other materials, with the different textures providing stimulation as patients 'twiddle' with them.

Ward manager Ann Callaghan said: "They are such a simple idea but they are very effective and, thanks to The League of Friends, we now have a good supply. Patients with dementia can experience restlessness and become agitated and twiddling with the bands can help to reduce anxiety and have a calming effect. They also have practical uses in keeping their hands warm and preventing them from taking out devices such as cannulas."

League of Friends Chairman Maureen Young said: "When staff asked if our members might be interested in knitting the twiddle mitts we put out a call and I was amazed at the response. They have thoroughly enjoyed the project and we're delighted that we were able to help in this way."

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Pictured above: South Tyneside District Hospital's Sister Julie Woodhouse, left, and Sister Sam Nicholson third from right, with Mary Peterson, Jill Wilson, Maureen Young and Sue Goddard, of The League of Friends

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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