

**PRESS RELEASE – Monday May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018**

**NHS staff in South Tyneside use virtual technology to improve dementia care**



NHS staff in South Tyneside gained invaluable insight into what life is like for patients with dementia by walking in their shoes - thanks to virtual technology.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust arranged for nearly 200 of its staff working in the borough's Community Integrated Care Teams, including community nurses, therapists, and the palliative care and bladder and bowel teams, to take a 'virtual dementia tour'. Using interactive equipment, they were able to experience at first-hand what living with dementia might be like.

Diagnosis of dementia is on the increase, with one in three people born in 2015 expected to die from the disease.

Irene Stables, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Divisional Director, Community Services, said: "Dementia has become one of the most important health issues that patients and our NHS are facing and it is essential that we equip staff with the necessary skills to care for dementia patients in the correct way.

"The virtual training helps them to understand dementia from the person's point of view so we can change practice to improve the quality of care we deliver to the residents of South Tyneside and improve the lives of those with this incurable disease. The feedback from staff who did the training was very positive. They said they found it thought-provoking and that it had changed the way in which they will care for dementia patients in the future. We hope now to offer more staff the opportunity to do this training."

The South Tyneside Community Integrated Care Teams provide an effective, high quality and co-ordinated response for people with complex health and social care needs, ensuring the most appropriate care is delivered in the right place, at the right time, preventing hospital admissions and readmissions, and allowing patients to receive the support they need in their own homes. The teams are made up of District Nurses and Community Matrons from South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, social workers and occupational therapists from South Tyneside Council, and 'social navigators' - support workers from the voluntary sector.

**ENDS**

*Photo caption: Staff experiencing the Virtual Dementia Tour*

For press enquiries about this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email [kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk](mailto:kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk)