

Media Release

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Further media information: Kirsty Marrins at *for dementia*, 020 7874 7203
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The charity *for dementia* shares the concerns raised by the Committee of Public Accounts (PAC 19th Report published 16/3/10). Progress with implementation of the National Dementia Strategy (published February 2009) has been far slower than hoped, and geographically patchy.

The charity *for dementia*, which is the parent body for Admiral Nurses the specialist dementia care nurses, has had mixed experiences of the strategy's influence at local level.

Chief Executive of the charity *for dementia* Barbara Stephens says: "In some parts of the country the goals and objectives set out in the Dementia Strategy have been enthusiastically embraced. We have seen substantial growth in investment in our Admiral Nursing services by PCTs and Local Authorities in areas such as Kent, Worcestershire and Southampton. However in other areas, dementia services are in decline. This lack of consistency perpetuates health and care inequalities."

Barbara Stephens continues: "There are two priority areas that require urgent and consistent attention to help improve dementia services across the country - closing the gap between health and social care¹ and driving uptake of training."²

Ian Weatherhead, Lead Nurse for Admiral Nursing DIRECT the national helpline supported by *for dementia* comments: "From our experience at Admiral Nursing DIRECT, based on what we hear directly from carers, access to services remains problematic. Dementia does not appear to be the national priority it needs to be. Large numbers of families are still struggling to get a diagnosis and access to essential services. Others are experiencing fragmented service provision."

Further anecdotal evidence from the charity's Admiral Nursing DIRECT helpline suggests that families are experiencing difficulties in accessing respite care.

– More –

¹ The divide between health and social care continues to fragment services. The complexities of dementia require co-ordination and collaboration across primary and secondary health care, social care, the voluntary and independent sectors, and acute hospitals. Whilst in some areas, health and social care providers have created joined-up care pathways, and these are working well, in other places, health and social care remains split leaving people with dementia and their carers struggling to access the mix of health and social provision they need.

² Workforce development is a cross-cutting theme in the Dementia Strategy. However, whilst several organisations have been commissioned to develop curricula and e-learning resources, there is no clear leadership setting minimum requirements for dementia education and training for health and social care staff.

Ian Weatherhead continues: “Around 90% of callers to Admiral Nursing DIRECT are seeking advice on respite. This is clearly a major issue as carers want to carry on caring for a loved one at home for as long as possible. In order to do that, carers need much greater support emotionally, practically and financially from services such as ours.

Additionally callers fear putting a loved one into care because of the constant reporting in the media of poor standards in care homes.

So families carry on until a crisis occurs, often triggering an acute hospital admission which could have been avoided.

Crisis admissions of this kind not only cost the health services a great deal but can also trigger premature admission into a care home.”

- ENDS -

Barbara Stephens, Chief Executive for dementia and **Ian Weatherhead**, Lead Nurse, Admiral Nursing DIRECT are available for interview. Call the charity direct to arrange - Kirsty Marrins, *for dementia*, 020 7874 7203, or Minerva on 01264-710428 / 07887-714957 / 07753-821525 info@minervaprc.com

Notes

The mission of *for dementia* is to improve the quality of life of people affected by dementia by:

- Promoting and developing Admiral Nursing
- Providing high quality affordable training
- Promoting best practice for professionals working with older people, carers and people with dementia
- Supporting the carers network **Uniting Carers for dementia** enabling carers to be heard.

Professional and family carers and people with dementia can call the dedicated **Admiral Nursing DIRECT** phone line 0845 257 9406 on Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 am- 9pm, Saturdays 10am – 1pm. Leave a message at any other time for a call back, or email questions to direct@fordementia.org.uk. For more charity information log on to www.fordementia.org.uk.

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