

Dementia research service celebrates first birthday

West region contributing highest numbers to register of volunteers for dementia research studies

One year on from the launch of a groundbreaking service called Join Dementia Research, almost 16,000 people nationally have signed up to the initiative which encourages people to register their interest in taking part in clinical research into this condition.

Among all the regions nationwide, the West of England has contributed the highest amount to the current total, with 1340 local people registering to the service which provides a valuable resource for researchers in their search for potential dementia research study participants. There are currently 10 dementia studies open in the West of England.

A promotional bus took the Join Dementia Research message to four locations in December, including Bristol, helping the West break through the 1000 registration mark with ease. One of the volunteers helping on the Bristol bus 'stop' was Hilary Doxford, who is a World Dementia Council member and is living with dementia. She is currently taking part in a research study looking at brain inflammation as dementia develops. Hilary, who lives in Yeovil and works for the UK Renal Registry, based at Southmead Hospital, said: "I have enjoyed taking part in the study and love being involved in research. I am well looked after, I have interesting discussions, and gain an insight into the latest theories. I am aware of the latest results and it keeps my brain active." She also believes research participation has given her a better understanding of the disease progression that she might otherwise have had. Hilary is promoting Join Dementia Research when the World Dementia Council, which was set up from the G8 dementia summit in 2013, comes together for its Annual Meeting today (25 February).

Only one in three dementia research studies recruit enough volunteers within a year* – a challenge which can significantly slow down the progress towards better care, new treatments and ultimately a cure.

Join Dementia Research provides a national telephone service with charity helplines (Alzheimer's Research UK 0300 111 5111 or Alzheimer's Society 0300 222 1122) and an online (www.joindementiaresearch.nihr.ac.uk) service for people to register their interest in participation in research into this disease. It is funded by the Department of Health and delivered in partnership with the National Institute for Health Research, Alzheimer's Research UK and the Alzheimer's Society. It was launched as part of the Prime Minister's Challenge of Dementia to increase the numbers of people with dementia participating in research. Dementia affects 850,000 people in the UK – a figure expected to rise to over one million people by 2021.

Life Sciences Minister George Freeman MP said: "I am delighted that so many people have signed up to Join Dementia Research in its first year and are now taking part in potentially life-changing studies. Positive action like this is exactly why we invest £1 billion each year through the National Institute for Health Research. But I hope this is only the beginning and would encourage more people, especially those with dementia, to join this vital service so they too can help in our fight against this condition."

Hilary Evans, Chief Executive of Alzheimer's Research UK, said: "Join Dementia Research is already showing its potential in making the UK one of the best places in the world to conduct cutting-edge dementia research and providing a variety of opportunities for people with the condition to engage with the latest developments. It's really important to spread the word about the service to provide everyone with dementia and their loved ones the opportunity to get involved."

Dr Doug Brown, Director of Research and Development at Alzheimer's Society, said: "Research is essential for us to make progress towards new dementia treatments and better care, but it can also empower people with dementia and their families to learn more about the condition and benefit from extra support."