

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### **FREE DEMENTIA PLAY READINGS AT SECOMBE THEATRE**

#### **St George's University Hospitals NHS Trust partners with Dementia Pathfinders Community Interest Company to host this special event**

Two performed play readings of *Don't Leave Me Now*, exploring the impact of early onset dementia, are taking place at Secombe Theatre in Sutton on 20th April 2015 as part of an initiative to raise awareness of dementia in south west London.

*Don't Leave Me Now* is inspired by the real-life stories of two families affected by early onset dementia: Professor Rachael Dixey, who cared for her partner for seven years, and Cindy Toulman who visited her husband in his care home every day for ten years. Playwright Brian Daniels, Artistic Director of New End Theatre Beyond, uses the stories to create a documentary-style production which highlights the emotions, challenges and dilemmas experienced by those affected by dementia.

St George's University Hospitals NHS Trust has partnered with Dementia Pathfinders to host *Don't Leave Me Now* to raise awareness of dementia amongst the health and social care workforce and in local communities across south west London.

Despite dementia being thought of as a condition that mostly affects older people, it's estimated that more than 40,000 people in the UK are living with early onset dementia – meaning a diagnosis under the age of 65. A dementia diagnosis for a person of working age causes a multitude of emotional and practical difficulties both for the patient and their family and friends.

**Dr Jeremy Isaacs, Consultant Neurologist and Dementia Clinical Lead at St George's Hospital, said:** "Our Cognitive Neurology service has been offering diagnosis and treatment for people with early onset dementia for over five years. However, it soon became clear that we needed to do more to support people in the months and years following a diagnosis. This led to the establishment of our Early Onset Dementia Support Group which now reaches almost 200 people who are living with or supporting someone with the condition. There is much more still to do to raise awareness of dementia and support the growing number of people affected by it as a patient or carer. I am grateful to Health Education South London for the funding that has allowed us to host a performance of *Don't Leave Me Now* in

South West London as part of our work to improve the lives of people with dementia and their supporters”.

**Barbara Stephens, Chief Executive of Dementia Pathfinders, says:** “Dementia is a complex condition and a diagnosis at a young age has life-changing consequences. Families are faced with making changes, over time, to their future expectations and plans. Support organisations and communities play a vital role helping people living with dementia to engage in fulfilling and meaningful activities. By hosting *Don't Leave Me Now*, we hope that local residents, community organisations and health and social care professionals will join us in our efforts to promote dementia friendly approaches and greater recognition of the issues that face people with early onset dementia”.

**Brian Daniels, Chief Executive and Artistic Director of New End Theatre Beyond, says:** “I was drawn to begin writing a play about early onset dementia after reading the journal of my good friend Professor Rachael Dixey who had nursed her partner, Irene Heron through seven years of early onset dementia. I was interested to explore the impact on family life and the point at which the often heart breaking decision must be made about 'letting go' of a loved one into the care system. I quickly realised that dementia can have its lighter moments too and that the challenges faced by families can make them stronger and more insightful into a human condition that can affect any of us at any time”.

The performances will take place on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at 2.30pm and 6.30pm at the Secombe Theatre on Cheam Road. The readings will be performed by a cast of five professional actors and directed by Jeni Draper. Each performance will be followed by a facilitated discussion and Q&A with the cast and director, including questions from the audience.

Free tickets can be ordered by calling the theatre's box office on 020 8770 6990 or visiting [www.suttontheatres.co.uk](http://www.suttontheatres.co.uk)

**This event is sponsored by Health Education South London.**

A collection will be made after each performance by St George's Hospital Charity to raise funds for the St George's Early Onset Dementia Support Group.

### **Don't Leave Me Now**

**Date:** Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015

**Time:** 2.30pm / 6.30pm

**Venue:** Secombe Theatre, 42 Cheam Road, Sutton, SM1 2SS

**Free Tickets:** 020 8770 6990 / [www.suttontheatres.co.uk](http://www.suttontheatres.co.uk)

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## **Contact**

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## **Notes to editor**



### **About Dementia Pathfinders**

DEMENTIA PATHFINDERS is a not-for-profit social enterprise providing education and training for the health and social care workforce and delivering therapeutic and social support for people with dementia and their families. The company seeks to build partnerships with individuals and groups to create better understanding of the needs and aspirations of people with dementia. Partners include academic institutions, independent providers of services and public sector organisations in health and social care. Dementia Pathfinders uses networks to publicise pioneering work delivered at local level with the aim of sharing best practice and promoting innovation.



Health Education South London

### **About Health Education South London**

As part of Health Education England we are responsible for planning the availability of all NHS healthcare staff in South London. We are responsible for educating and training doctors, dentists, nurses and all health professionals, and supporting them at every stage in their career. Health Education South London is, with its members, designing, developing and delivering a workforce to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, supporting the delivery of world class care and high quality patient outcomes through education and training.

### **About New End Theatre Beyond**

NEW END THEATRE BEYOND is the ongoing production arm of Hampstead's New End Theatre where Brian Daniels was its Artistic Director from 1997 to 2011. During that time Brian produced more than 200 new plays, mostly World or UK premieres. Since 2011 New End Theatre Beyond has continued to produce work including 'The Good and the True' (London, Prague, touring and off-Broadway, New York, Australia and New Zealand). 'Jerusalem Tango' by Pat Rowe (Leeds and London), Churchill by Tony Tortora (Leeds and London) 'Where's Your Mama Gone?' (Leeds and London). The propensity of the NEW END THEATRE BEYOND is towards issue led plays relating to contemporary social concerns. The company is a non-profit making entity.