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## Media Release

### RUH play team promote play

Play specialists at the RUH are celebrating the benefits of play in the treatment of children, as part of National Play in Hospital Week.

This national initiative promotes the unique role of play in helping children and young people on the road to recovery.

During the week, children have been getting involved in all sorts of arts and craft activities. Getting messy provides a distraction, helps them to relax and alleviates stress.

The arts and crafts have been provided with funding from The Starlight Children's Foundation, who has teamed up with the National Association of Hospital Play Staff to help play staff across the country celebrate play and demonstrate its importance in the treatment of children.

The RUH has two Play Specialists, Jo Powell and Lyn Gardiner. Jo says: "Play is our work. We know that play has an important role in a child's health and development and can speed recovery.

"We use play to welcome children to hospital and prepare the children to cope with surgery or other procedures. We encourage children to keep up their usual interests and use specific play techniques to minimise stressful events by acting them out in advance. This helps reduce a child's possible fear of hospital, lessen any pain or anxiety and meet their play needs.

"When we're preparing children for surgical and medical procedures, we explain what is going to happen and how by using photographs, dolls and real objects. For example, we'll show them that the doctor will be wearing a hat and a mask and explain how they will be given 'sleeping medicine', where possible offering them a choice of having spray or cream. We encourage the children to ask questions and they can play with a doll and objects such as hat, mask, lines, a syringe and bandages.

"By using toys and activities, we manage to distract them, making the process much easier and more positive for the child and for their family.

"We're very grateful to the Starlight Children's Foundation for providing the funding to help us to highlight and celebrate the role of the play specialist in healthcare."

**Ends**