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Media Release

High quality diabetes service at RUH

A new, multi-skilled Paediatric Diabetes team at the Royal United Hospital is providing specialist care for children and young people with diabetes, not only in outpatients, but also at school and at home.

As well as more specialist nurses, dietitian support has been increased and, crucially, a psychologist has been appointed to help support the children and their families. Vital equipment, including a special blood-testing machine, which is used in clinics, has also been purchased.

The team provides support for 200 children and young people with diabetes in BANES, Wiltshire and Mendip. Many of these children were diagnosed at a very young age, often under the age of five. Dr Amanda Billson, Lead Paediatrician for the Childrens' Diabetes team, explains how the new team will improve the ability of these children and their carers to manage their diabetes.

“The new team will be better placed to provide the education and psychological support that these children, their parents and other carers need, in order to manage their diabetes on a day-to-day basis. Diabetes is not an illness, but is a condition that these children and their families have to learn to live with. Education on how to adjust insulin doses and nutritional advice is essential, but emotional support is also particularly important.

“School is a major part of any child’s life. Children with diabetes need to give insulin by injection or insulin pump at every meal including lunchtime at school or nursery. They also need to monitor their blood glucose levels with regular finger prick blood tests throughout the day. As well as supporting the families, the new team will be better able to provide teachers and other staff with the education that they need to support these children. This will allow them to continue to take a full part in school life, including school trips and extra curricular activities, despite their diabetes. In the longer term, we hope that we will also see fewer children with diabetes needing admission to hospital with illness and fewer young adults getting the complications of diabetes such as eyesight and kidney problems.”

Twins Jack and Sam Sheppard were diagnosed with diabetes five years ago and they attend a diabetic clinic at the RUH every three months. Dad Antony says: “Due to the complexity of the condition it is not always easy to maintain the readings we would ideally like for the boys and the team is always available to offer suggestions on where we could make improvements. We can’t speak highly enough of the care we feel Jack and Sam receive from the whole department.”

Over the last three years the Department of Health has undertaken a review of children’s diabetes services, to ensure every service will meet ‘Best Practice’ care standards. The unit at the RUH is one of the first in the South West to be able to meet these standards, thanks to investment from the Trust and the support of local GPs and Primary Care Trusts.

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