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Communications Department
Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230communications@ruh.nhs.uk
www.ruh.nhs.uk

Media Release

RUH Celebrate 50 years of Play in Hospitals

Play specialists at the Royal United Hospital will be helping young patients celebrate 50 years of Play in Hospitals this week (14-20 October), by organising a range of exciting activities and entertainment.

During the week, the children will be celebrating with Dr Betty Ding Dong, the giggle doctor, who brings music, magic, fun and laughter to the children. They'll also be getting creative with crafts. Players from Bath Rugby will be calling in, and Muppet the Pets as Therapy dog will also be making a visit to the ward. The children will also glimpse a bit of history, as staff will be dressed up in uniforms from times gone by.

It is thought the first Play volunteers, whose role was to play with children on the ward, had begun in hospitals as early as 1957 and were known as 'Lady Greens' by the children due to their uniforms. It's a little less formal these days and you'll see our play specialists dressed in purple polo shirts and trousers, which is much more practical dress for their role in ensuring that play has a place and a purpose in a child's health and development, and is an essential part of a youngsters' care.

The RUH has two Play Specialists, Jo Powell and Lyn Gardiner. Lyn said: "Working alongside other health care professionals, we organise daily play and activities in the children's ward or at the bedside. We providing play to help children master and cope with fears and anxieties, and prepare children for hospital procedures.

"Our aim is to use play to welcome children to hospital and prepare them 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 play specialists prepare children for surgical and medical procedures, they explain what is going to happen and how, by using photographs, dolls and real objects. They encourage the children to ask questions and they can play with a doll and objects such as a hat, mask, lines, syringe and bandages. By using toys and activities, they aim to distract the children by making the process much easier and more positive for the whole family.

Ends**Photo:**

One-year old Ruby from Bath with Student Nurse Janey Washington-Jones