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Media Release

Pet therapy for patients at the Royal United Hospital

Pet Therapy is proving to be a hit with patients at the Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath NHS Foundation Trust.

Every week, three specially trained Pets As Therapy (PAT) dogs and their volunteer handlers visit patients at the RUH.

Sharon Manhi, Lead for Patient and Carer Experience at the RUH said:

“We’ve had such positive feedback from patients and their families about the PAT dogs visits and how they’ve been a real joy and comfort, cheering up their relatives and making them smile. We mostly focus on the PAT dogs visiting patients on our older people’s wards as some patients have pets at home and miss them, and for others it makes their day, they simply enjoy seeing and stroking the friendly dogs.

“When PAT dog Muddy Puddles made a visit recently, a nurse said to me it was the first time she had seen one of their patients’ smile and open up to talk. It’s hard to describe what exactly these dogs bring, but it’s such a joy to see.”

The RUH regularly welcomes Fudge, a golden Labrador, Milo, the Spoodle (a cross between a Springer Spaniel and a poodle) and Muddy Puddles, an Australian Service dog. There can be as many as four PAT dog visits each week and they have proved to be popular with staff as well. Sharon Manhi continued:

“Our staff love seeing the dogs too. For some, it’s a chance for them to stop to say hello to the dog and owner and is a great stress reliever.”

The PAT dogs are assessed through the national charity Pets As Therapy which invites owners who can spare some free time to join their PAT team to become a visiting volunteer.

Registered PAT Dog Volunteer Martin Fricker, owner of Fudge said:

“All the staff and patients give us such a warm welcome and big smiles when we arrive at the hospital. It’s a real pleasure to visit patients with Fudge and I love the variety of conversations we have. Fudge loves meeting people and he’s so gentle. I always look forward to our visits and would recommend Pets As Therapy to anyone who has a dog and is interested in volunteering. It’s so rewarding.”

The RUH is always looking for new members to join the PAT dog team at the hospital. Those interested will need to see their pet pass the Pets As Therapy training before applying to volunteer with their dog. For more information visit: www.petsastherapy.org

Ends

Notes to Editor:

Pets As Therapy is a national charity which provides a visiting service in hospitals and a variety of other venues across the UK.

All breeds of dog can become part of a PAT Team, they must have been with their owner for at least 6 months, be over 9 months of age and be able to pass the temperament assessment. All breeds of dog can become part of a PAT Team, they must have been with their owner for at least 6 months, be over 9 months of age and be able to pass the temperament assessment.

All the PAT dog visits start by checking in with staff in Patient and Liaison Service (PALS) office first. The PAT dog handler is then taken to the ward by an RUH member of staff and they finish their visit back in PALS, so they have the opportunity to provide feedback on anything that might have come up during the visit.

For more information about the charity or to request an application form to join the PAT dog team visit www.petsastherapy.org