

## **Press Release – EMBARGOED UNTIL 8 NOVEMBER**

**Issue date: 8 November 2007**

### **Keeping the RUH Safe**

New Government statistics announced today show a welcome reduction in the number of physical assaults against staff at the RUH. In 2006-7 there were 39 physical assaults against RUH staff, (10% per 1,000 staff) compared with 94, (23.4% per 1000) the previous year

Across England, statistics released by the NHS Security Management Service show there were 55,709 physical assaults against NHS staff in England, 2,986 fewer than 2005-6. This is the second year running that assaults against NHS staff have fallen.

In support of NHS security awareness month this month, the RUH will be particularly raising awareness amongst its staff and visitors of the importance of a safe and secure NHS.

RUH's security management specialist, Janet Whitwam, will be encouraging staff to become more security-conscious. She is one of the many security management specialists throughout the country who are striving to protect NHS staff from violence and hospital property from theft. Her role includes developing local solutions to security issues and acting as a single point of contact for staff and the police.

Janet says: "Many thousands of people visit the hospital each year and we have a very small number of incidents, but we treat every one of them very seriously. Violence against staff is not acceptable and it is essential that staff report each and every incident. While there will be cases where prosecution is not appropriate, reporting incidents helps measure the true nature of the problem and builds better deterrence and prevention.

"We do recognise that patients and their relatives who come into hospital are anxious, distressed or in a lot of pain and are perhaps not as rational as they would be in their own homes. Our staff are trained to handle these types of situations and we have mechanisms in place to deal with them."

Over the past year the trust has invested and expanded its security team to ensure that there are two officers on duty at any time.

Avon and Somerset police are due to establish a base in the Atrium for local community support officers and this will open early in 2008.

Janet continues: "Our staff have a key role in keeping themselves and the hospital safe and secure. They should always wear identification at work and question strangers if safe to do so. We need to ensure there is no 'tailgating' into secure areas and also ensure that doors, windows, and cupboards are

locked in unoccupied secure areas. Staff should make sure they know who their health and safety representative is, protect themselves and be aware of our local security policy.

Director of facilities Stephen Holt says

“We take the safety of staff, patients and visitors very seriously at the RUH. The NHS should be a safe place for staff to work and for the treatment of the sick and injured and we will not tolerate anti-social and criminal activity in the hospital environment.”

**Ends**

**Issued by communications office**

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**Notes to Editors**

- **Frontline staff at the RUH ( those working in Accident and Emergency and the Medical Assessment Unit for instance ) have had training in conflict resolution**
- **There are CCTV cameras throughout the hospital and in A&E in particular, and the unit can be “locked down” should there be a serious incident**
- **Staff who work alone, and those who have a lot of contact with the public have personal alarms.**