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Communications Department
Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230/1299communication@ruh.nhs.uk
www.ruh.nhs.uk**Media Release****Neonatal staff are outstanding says UNICEF UK**

UNICEF UK say that staff on the RUH neonatal unit are outstanding and they have awarded them a Baby Friendly accreditation for the excellent education and support they provide to new mums to breastfeed their babies. UNICEF say the RUH's neonatal unit was the best they had assessed in the country.

This glowing praise followed an assessment of the unit's participation in the national Baby Friendly Initiative; a programme developed to ensure a high standard of care in relation to infant feeding for pregnant women and mothers and babies.

Sarah Goodwin, Senior Sister in NICU, who led the Baby Friendly Initiative at the RUH explains: "This initiative encourages maternity units to implement a breastfeeding programme as best practice, to encourage mums to breastfeed their babies for the best possible start in life. A mother's milk is perfectly and uniquely made for their baby's needs. Giving their milk to their baby makes a big difference to both the baby's health and their own.

"There is well documented evidence that breastfeeding reduces the risk of babies becoming ill. It's also associated with a reduced risk of later childhood disease and protects the mother's health. It has also been suggested that the lower incidence of illness associated with higher breastfeeding rates could lead to significant cost savings in the treatment of illnesses such as gastro-enteritis. It's so low tech – and yet could save millions.

"There are all sorts of reasons why mums may not want to breastfeed; they may have had a previous bad experience, they may have had a rough time in labour, they're worried their breasts changing shape, or simply because they have no experience of it, but we can dispel myths and stories and, through education and support, we can help mums choose to breastfeed.

"Breastfeeding is particularly beneficial for preterm babies and these mums need knowledge and support to make an informed decision. They can't breastfeed immediately so mums have to express breast milk for some 8/10 times in a 24-hour period to initiate milk supply. It's tough on them given the trauma they've already been through. Premature babies are more prone to problems so breast milk is even more important, it's medicine to them, it has everything they need in it. And of course it's important for mums to bond with babies.

Tania from Bath gave birth to Rose who was born at 30 weeks, so ten weeks early. Tania says: "Right from the beginning I was encouraged to breastfeed and I wanted to do it. I didn't want to be sterilising kit all the time and breastfeeding seemed the best thing. This

little baby was just learning to breathe on her own and it all seemed very daunting. At the moment she's taking some of my milk through a tube in her nose and I'm nursing her at my breast so that she gets the feel of it. She'll stop being tube fed when we're confident she's taking it on her own. There are no set rules you just have to try things out. Every nurse brings her own experience and they've all made me feel confident and comfortable enough to try."

Sarah concludes: "UNICEF said that they were delighted with the standard of care and information, advice and knowledge of the neonatal team. All our maternity services staff are providing consistent good practice across the service; we're all giving out the same information and offering the same support. It's brought everyone together and we couldn't be more thrilled at our accreditation from UNICEF."

Ends

Notes to Editors:

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative was launched in the UK in 1994 for the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding in the community and health care settings. The Baby Friendly Initiative works with the health-care system to ensure a high standard of care for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers and babies. Support is provided for health-care facilities that are seeking to implement best practice and an assessment and accreditation process recognises those that have achieved the required standard.

All members of the NICU clinical team at the RUH undertook the Baby Friendly training over a period of a year, which covered such things as the anatomy and physiology of the breast, the mechanics of breastfeeding and the principles of attachment, the benefits and importance of breast milk to mother and baby, assessment to ensure adequate milk supply, and how to treat common problems such as mastitis.

Accreditation is given following two stages of assessment; Stage 1 requires mechanisms to enable the breastfeeding policy to be implemented and maintained. These include a staff education programme, an antenatal education programme and an audit tool to audit the Baby Friendly standards. Stage 2 involves providing education for all clinical staff as appropriate to their role.

Stage 3 will take place next year, when the focus will be on how the RUH is ensuring that Baby Friendly standards are implemented for all pregnant women and new mothers.