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## Media Release

### RUH Celebrates Play in Hospital

Young patients at the Royal United Hospital enjoyed a welcome distraction from their hospital experience during National Play in Hospital week (6-12 October).

The youngsters enjoyed a visit from a group of fireman who drove their impressive fire engine up to the doors of the hospital so that they could get a closer look. Local police officers also pulled up in a squad car and the children tested out the flashing lights and sirens.

During the week, the young patients also got creative with crafts and enjoyed the company of Dr Betty Ding Dong, the giggle doctor who brings music, magic, fun and laughter to the children. They created art with our artist in residence Edwina Bridgeman, and petted Muppet, the Pets as Therapy dog, as well as a few other surprises.

The RUH has two Play Specialists, Jo Powell and Lyn Gardiner. Lyn said: "Play is a crucial part of the care offered by us at the RUH to children and young people. Play helps children cope with any pain and fear while they are in hospital and National Play in Hospital Week is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the positive impact play and distraction has on a child's hospital experience."

The Play Specialists work alongside other health care professionals, organising daily play and activities in the children's ward or at the bedside. They provide play to help children master and cope with fears and anxieties, and prepare children for hospital procedures.

Lyn adds: "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.

"Play in Hospital Week was great fun for our young patients and their families, and our staff, and we hope our activities throughout the week have helped raise awareness of the importance of play."

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:**

Picture one: Patient Sam Dagger (10 years old) with fire fighters Andrew Henderson and Ross Pullen

Picture two: Junior Burke (aged 7) with fire fighters Simon Ross and Jason Petchey from Bath Fire Station (Avon Fire & Rescue)