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RUH Project SEARCH students celebrate success

Congratulations to students from Project SEARCH, the partnership at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust that helps young people with learning disabilities to find jobs, who are celebrating graduating from their one-year course.

Project SEARCH is a collaboration between the RUH Trust, Fosse Way School in Radstock and Virgin Care. It enables students in their final year of education to spend a year on site with an employer, which provides them with the skills, experience, knowledge and confidence to find paid employment at the end of their course.

Project SEARCH teacher Tony Kelly said: "It's fantastic to celebrate with our students at graduation and to see just how much they have progressed in their time at the RUH. It's always rewarding to watch them develop into confident, sociable and able young adults, with experience in work and social skills that can really help them to succeed in the job market."

Around a dozen students are selected each year to the programme. They spend a small proportion of every day in a classroom and the rest working in various departments on site as trainees in around 40 departments and wards. A number have gone on to permanent employment with the Trust.

Georgia Long, 22, from Saltford, near Bath, is on placement in the Children's ward as a patient support assistant. Her role includes tidying and cleaning rooms and kitchens, restocking equipment and infection control.

She said: "I've really enjoyed my time here. I was very nervous at the beginning but all the staff made me very welcome and part of the family. Working here and doing lots of

different jobs had made me much more independent and able to do a valuable job for the department.”

Beverley Gilbert, ward Housekeeper and Georgia’s mentor, said: “She has been absolutely amazing. She’s learned a lot, taken things on board and does her work really well. Everyone loves her.”

Shannon Parfitt, 19, from Radstock, is another patient support assistant, working on Waterhouse ward, an older people’s unit.

She said: “I’ve learned a great deal – how to be more sociable and less shy and to do tasks to my best potential, working hard to be professional in a professional environment. I’ve really enjoyed myself.”

Ward Clerk and mentor Anna Hayes said: “I think Shannon has done really well. She’s listened to advice, she’s very interested and has developed her abilities and skills. It’s good for us to see how she’s improved from day to day. She’s coped very well and it’s all been very positive.”

RUH Trust Chief Operating Officer Rebecca Carlton, who presented the students with their graduation certificates, said: “Our congratulations go to all our students who have achieved and given so much over the past year. We are committed to the cause of Project SEARCH and immensely proud to support young people to progress into full-time employment.”

Jon Plechowicz, Virgin Care’s Head of Learning Disabilities Social Care, said: “We are proud to be part of Project SEARCH, partnering with RUH and Fosse Way to provide opportunities to young people with learning disabilities which they may otherwise not have. The young people involved have demonstrated that they have huge amounts to offer prospective employers and we look forward to this project spreading to other areas of the country, with BaNES demonstrating what is possible to allow more students the chance to gain experience and employment.”

For more information go to <http://www.fossewayschool.co.uk/project-search/>

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Notes to Editor:

The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust provides acute treatment and care for a catchment population of around 500,000 people in Bath, and the surrounding towns and villages in North East Somerset and Western Wiltshire. The hospital provides healthcare to the population served by four Clinical Commissioning Groups: Bath & North East Somerset CCG, Wiltshire CCG, Somerset CCG and South Gloucestershire CCG.

The Trust provides 759 beds and a comprehensive range of acute services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

In 2015 The Royal United Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust acquired the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (RNHRD) NHS Foundation Trust. The RNHRD treats patients from across the country offering services in rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME, cancer related fatigue and fatigue linked to other long term conditions such as multiple sclerosis.

The RUH is changing - we have an exciting programme of redevelopment underway transforming our site and further improving the services we provide. The Trust is now building a purpose-built RNHRD and Therapies Centre and working towards new Dyson Cancer Centre. For more details visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk/about/fit_for_the_future

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk