

14.10.19

Communications Department
Royal United Hospital
Combe Park
Bath
BA1 3NG

Tel: 01225 826230 / 821459
Mobile: 07557 756658 (office hours)

Media Release

Ruh-tr.communicationsteam@nhs.net
www.ruh.nhs.uk
<https://twitter.com/RUHBath>

Specialist support for people diagnosed with sight loss introduced at Bath's RUH

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust (RUH) have launched a new service providing emotional and practical support to people newly diagnosed with sight loss.

A new Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) works alongside health professionals to offer support and advice to blind and partially sighted people on a range of areas. These include independent living, returning to work, benefit entitlements, emotional support, and coping at home.

Heidi Koloska was recruited to the ECLO role at the RUH in June 2019.

Heidi said: "I can offer support to people when they might be feeling at their lowest. If someone arrives in clinic and they are told their sight is getting worse, it's life-changing news. This applies to those with long-standing sight loss or newly diagnosed.

"It's always a difficult conversation, but the main thing is to be there and offer a safe place to talk about it. Reassuring the patient they are not on their own, and encouraging a referral to a local/national organisation who can offer further emotional and practical support to enable them to remain independent.

"Sometimes I'm the first person a patient will speak to after being told they are losing their sight, so it's my responsibility to make sure they get the support they need and in a timely manner. I like to think of my role as a bridge that links the hospital with the local community."

Abi Jones, RNIB ECLO Service Manager for the South West, said: “It can be an overwhelming experience being told you are going to lose your sight. That feeling is compounded if people have to deal with it alone.

“ECLOs provide much needed information, advice and guidance. We are extremely pleased to be working with our partners to bring this support and advice to patients attending the RUH.”

RUH Head of Optometry Helen Broadbent said: “A diagnosis of sight loss can be a traumatic experience. The appointment of an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer will make a huge difference to these patients by providing them with essential support, information and advice when they need it most.

“We are delighted that we are now able to offer this service at the RUH, thanks to our partnership with RNIB.”

To find out more information about ECLOs, please visit RNIB’s website:
www.rnib.org.uk/ecloinformation.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

All media enquiries to the RNIB PR team on at pressoffice@rnib.org.uk or 020 7391 2223.

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.

Chair:
Alison Ryan

Chief Executive:
James Scott



The RUH is changing - we have an exciting programme of redevelopment underway transforming our site and further improving the services we provide. The Trust has opened the purpose-built RNHRD and Brownsword Therapies Centre and is now working towards the 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

Chair:
Alison Ryan

Chief Executive:
James Scott



Everyone
Matters
Working
Together
Making a
Difference