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RUH's army of volunteers works through the coronavirus pandemic

Across the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust, an invaluable band of volunteers is helping to keep the hospital running throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Independent charity The League of Friends of the RUH organises the majority of the volunteers at the Trust, filling a range of important roles across the hospital, from supporting patients and staff in departments such as A&E, to helping run the charity's shop in the Atrium, its coffee shop and even litter picking around the hospital grounds.

Some of these volunteers have been able to continue to give their time to the RUH during the coronavirus pandemic, supported by nearly 100 new volunteers who have come forward to help support the hospital at this time.

One such volunteer is Gill Grady, who said she had no hesitation in offering to help the Friends of the RUH.

"When I saw how hard all the NHS staff are working right now, I thought it was the least I could do and would give something back," she said. "I didn't think twice about offering to help. I'm aware of the potential risks but I'm retired and live on my own, so I don't feel as though I'm putting anyone else at risk."

Gill is one of a number of volunteer housekeepers based in the Doctors' Mess, a relaxing space away from the hustle and bustle of the busy hospital, where doctors can enjoy some much needed downtime and catch up with colleagues.

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“I help to make sure the staff have refreshments like tea and coffee, that the chairs are spaced out for social distancing, that the sleeping area is tidy, and I’ll even do a bit of cleaning – just whatever I can do to help really,” she said.

“We appreciate them and they appreciate us. I’ll sometimes have a chat with one of the doctors at the end of their shift, and ask them how their day has been and how they are feeling. It’s nice to have that interaction and to be a listening ear in those situations.

“I really enjoy volunteering. It’s a win-win for me – I get to help out the doctors at the RUH at what is such a challenging time and feel that I’m giving something back at the same time.”

The RUH is also supported by volunteers from a range of other organisations, including Bath Hospital Radio, Alzheimer’s Society, Dorothy House, Pets as Therapy and Macmillan Cancer Support.

The Forever Friends Appeal has also helped support the recruitment of new volunteers during the pandemic.

Volunteer Keith Getheridge has been involved with fundraising for The Forever Friends Appeal for many years, after his late wife Wendy was diagnosed with cancer.

Keith said: “When I saw the appeal for volunteers I was really eager to get involved. Knowing that COVID-19 was on the way, I thought that there might be a big gap in the number of volunteers at the RUH, so wanted to do what I could to help.

“I got in touch with the hospital straight away. I know my wife would have been at the front of the queue and I felt the same way.

“I really didn’t mind what I did, I just wanted to help. I took on a part-time housekeeping role in the Surgical Short Stay ward and work from 7.30am to 1.30pm, three days a week.”

Volunteer housekeepers support the ward-based cleaners by completing tasks within the kitchen around meals times, dusting the ward corridors and helping keep ward equipment clean.

“It’s not glamorous work, but there’s a lot of satisfaction that comes from helping to keep the ward clean, tidy and safe for patients,” said Keith. “The time goes quickly and there’s always something that needs to be cleaned or disinfected. It’s good to know that I’m helping and providing a very important role for the hospital.”

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League of Friends of the RUH Volunteer Services Manager Samantha Nolan said: “This week is national Volunteers’ Week, when we say a very special thank you to all our volunteers for the work they do. Our volunteers do a fantastic job every day of the year helping patients and supporting the RUH.

“Volunteers’ Week is also an important time for us to think about the many volunteers who have had to temporarily stand down because of COVID-19 and look forward to the day we can welcome them back.”

The League of Friends is currently looking for volunteers to fill a range of vacancies at the hospital, such as in housekeeping and Estates-based roles.

If you would like to volunteer, or find out more about the opportunities available, contact the Friends of the RUH office on 01225 824046 or visit www.friendsoftheruh.org.uk

You can watch a video about some of our volunteers [here](#)

Ends

Notes to Editor:

The World Health Organization has designated 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. Our nurses and midwives are a big part of the RUH family and throughout the year we are celebrating the work they do, going above and beyond every day to give our patients compassionate care.

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

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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 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

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