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Media Release

Dying Matters – are you in a good place?

This Dying Matters Awareness Week, (10-16 May), the palliative care team at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust is encouraging families to think about what is important to them at the end of life, to talk about it and to plan for it, so that we are better prepared to support our loved ones when they are nearing end of life.

The focus of Dying Matters Week 2021 is the importance of being in a good place to die. Recent years have seen a change in where people die, with more people dying at home and out of hospital.

Helen Meehan, RUH Lead Nurse for Palliative Care and End of Life, said: “There is no right or wrong place to die – it will be different for everyone. But it is important for families to think about it, to talk about it and to plan for it. We want people of all ages to be in a good place when they die - physically, emotionally and with the right care in place. Getting there means having some important conversations about what matters to the individual and their family in relation to end of life care, dying and bereavement.

“Not many of us express a wish for where we might die, many of us would wish to be at home if asked, but for many it is hospital where people are cared for in the last days of life. “The COVID-19 pandemic has brought so many challenges – especially caring for those at the end for life and their families, but we have such a responsibility for ensuring that we provide compassionate, supportive and dignified care at this time.”

End of life care at the RUH, which has been rated outstanding by the Care Quality Commission, is supported by the RUH’s charity The Forever Friends Appeal. It has recently funded Memory Boxes supplied to every ward to help create special memories and keepsakes for patients nearing end of life and their families. It also supplies Butterfly Fund bereavement bags, providing a sensitive way of returning personal belongings to family members. More information and details of how to donate to the Butterfly Fund are available on the Forever Friends Appeal website

<https://support.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk/donation-pages/butterfly-fund>.

Another initiative is the Compassionate Companion Service, in partnership with Dorothy House Hospice Care and funded by the RUH's charity, The Forever Friends Appeal with a grant from the Sperring Trust. This service enables specially-trained volunteers to offer support, compassionate listening, comfort and companionship to patients in their last days of life at the hospital.

The RUH Chaplaincy team has helped to arrange marriages at short notice under a special license for patients nearing the end of life. The palliative care team has also created special wedding boxes that contain bunting, fairy lights, ceramic hearts as a keepsake gift, flowers, bubbles and a wedding card, which the wards can request to support the marriage of a couple when time is so precious.

For more information visit the Dying Matters website
<https://www.dyingmatters.org/AwarenessWeek>

Ends

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 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