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Media Release

Visiting suspended at RUH Bath

The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust has taken the difficult decision to suspend visiting from Thursday 30 December 2021 until further notice. This is in response to rising numbers of COVID-19 cases within the hospital and in the local community.

The RUH previously suspended visiting in November 2020, but was able to relax restrictions from April 2021, while COVID-19 cases remained relatively low. Visiting suspensions are now in place again to protect patients and staff.

Other than maternity visiting, the only exceptional circumstances where one visitor – an immediate family member or carer – will be permitted to visit are listed below:

- Parent or appropriate adult visiting your child
- Patients nearing the end of their life
- Parent or carer accompanying a vulnerable adult

People are asked to contact the ward in advance to discuss appropriate arrangements.

Any inpatients with COVID-19 or awaiting test results for COVID-19 are not able to receive visitors, with the exception of those who are receiving end of life care.

There are no changes to the current Maternity visiting guidelines, which are:

- Up to two support people can continue to accompany you through labour and birth.
- You can be joined by one support person when attending any outpatient appointment
- Visiting for your support person after your baby is born is 9am - 9pm on Mary ward
- Your support person can continue to join you for your scan appointments.
- Children are not permitted to attend any appointments.

A face covering must be worn and your support person must perform a lateral flow test before attending any appointment. If the result is positive they must not attend and follow current Government guidance. Proof of a negative result will be requested when you attend.

For outpatient appointments or care in the Emergency Department:

- Adult patients should attend on their own, unless they need a carer
- Children can be accompanied by one adult but please do not bring any siblings

During this time we ask and encourage visitors to use other methods of keeping in touch. Hospital wards have a mobile phone and an iPad with WhatsApp and Zoom to help keep patients in touch with loved ones through phone and video calls.

We have also introduced a brand new role of Family Liaison Facilitator to ensure that relatives are kept updated on their loved ones during their stay in hospital. They will provide an essential link between patients and their next of kin and provide a professional, compassionate and supportive service to patients, their families and carers.

Plus we have a dedicated 'Keeping in Touch' service which can pass on a message to your loved one in hospital. Just email ruh-tr.keepingintouch@nhs.net or call 01225 826984 to tell us what your message is.

Chief Nurse Toni Lynch said: "Suspending visiting isn't a decision we take lightly. We know this is difficult for our patients and their loved ones.

"However, as the Omicron variant spreads, we have had to take this step in order to keep our patients and staff safe. That's always our top priority.

"We are absolutely committed to helping our patients to stay in touch with their friends and family in other ways. Patients are encouraged to use phone calls and video calls, and our staff will help with this wherever possible. Please do talk to our ward teams about this.

"We will keep these visiting restrictions under regular review and will make sure we publicise any future changes as and when they are made. Thank you for your understanding."

For more information about visiting the RUH, please see <https://bit.ly/2QQ7JIA>

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