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Media Release

Boy, 7, thanks RUH team for cancer care

A 7-year-old boy has said thank you to the “lovely and kind” team at the Royal United Hospitals Bath (RUH) NHS Foundation Trust that has cared for him throughout more than three years of cancer treatment.

George Gliddon, from near Malmesbury, was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia, also known as ALL, in March 2020. Now, after hundreds of hospital visits, procedures and thousands of tablets, George has recently finished his chemotherapy treatment.

George said: “The nurses were really friendly, happy, kind and lovely. They would give me medicine to make me better, and help to take my mind off things when I was feeling poorly.

“It’s been nice being in hospital because I like my nurses and being off school, but it has been a bit hard too. I felt really happy when I took my last chemotherapy tablet but it is a bit strange not being in the hospital so much.”

Despite his diagnosis, George was able to start school with his peers, join his local Malmesbury Youth football team and take up drumming lessons. Now, with his treatment behind him, he’s preparing for his Grade 3 drumming exam with lots of Oasis renditions, but football is where his real aspirations lie.

“I want to be a footballer like Messi or Ronaldo,” said George. “Messi because he’s really clever with the ball, and Ronaldo because he’s good at shooting.

“There were times when I couldn’t kick or dribble the ball and couldn’t do the drums.

“But now I’ve finished my treatment, I’m feeling really great.”

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, raising awareness of the impact of cancer on children and their families.

George's dad Neville said: "We noticed George wasn't right when he started getting breathless swimming or trampolining and we noticed bruising on his legs.

"At first we were told by the local surgery that he had low iron levels. But, when he wasn't getting better we started looking online at symptoms and saw leukaemia on the list as a possible cause but naturally hoped it wasn't this.

"After phoning 111 and having him assessed by a doctor at the local hospital we ended up in A&E in Bristol, and within hours George had started his cancer treatment.

"At that point we didn't tell George or his siblings he had cancer, we knew that would scare them. We simply told them he had poorly blood."

After nearly two weeks at Bristol Children's Hospital following his initial diagnosis, George's treatment transferred to the RUH and included four cycles of intensive treatment over seven months.

Neville added: "The first seven months were incredibly hard. We were living day to day, never thinking beyond that. We just knew that every day we were one day closer to when it would all be over. Two years of daily maintenance chemotherapy followed that.

"The team at the RUH have been so amazing, and made it all not so awful. The reassurance and comfort they provided was invaluable."

This summer, after his last chemotherapy tablet, George rang the end of treatment bell in the RUH Children's Ward surrounded by his proud family and care team.

Over the course of his treatment he collected almost 3,000 Beads of Courage - small glass beads of different shapes and sizes that recognised every test, procedure, scan, blood transfusion and chemotherapy drug.

George's mum Carolyn said: "For any other families going through this we would reiterate what the hospital told us, namely don't compare yourselves to anyone else as everyone's journey will be different.

"It has been incredibly hard. But when George started taking the maintenance medicine in 2021 he started to bounce back. His hair grew back, he got his energy – before there were times he couldn't really walk or eat.

"For almost half his life he's been having cancer treatment. You wouldn't know it now looking at him, other than the small scar where his port line was which was used to administer some of the chemotherapy drugs.

"The other day he said 'mummy, I don't feel sick any more' and it feels like we're finally starting a new normal."

Ends

Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we're proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.

We're currently building a new Cancer Centre at the RUH. The Dyson Cancer Centre, which is set to open in autumn 2023, will help transform the care we provide for patients, families and carers.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

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