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## Media Release

### The RUH celebrates 21,000 hours of volunteering

Bob the Dog was just one attendee at a party at the Royal United Hospitals (Bath) NHS Foundation Trust on Monday 3 June, which was held to celebrate the invaluable contribution of volunteers to the hospital.

The event kicked off National Volunteers' Week 2024, during which charities and organisations such as the RUH thank all those who give their time to help others.

In 2023, around 250 people volunteered with the RUH, ranging from 16-year-olds participating in the NHS Cadets programme, up to people in their 80s. Together, they gave 21,000 hours of time – with 71 individuals helping for more than 100 hours each. Receiving specialist training for their roles, the volunteers offer both practical and emotional support to those at all stages of a hospital journey, from the Welcome Volunteers in the Atrium who help visitors find their way around, to the Dorothy House Compassionate Companions who sit with end-of-life patients to ensure they are not alone.

Visitors and patients might also meet them on wards and in outpatient clinics and the Emergency Department, or be entertained by them when listening to the hospital's 'Bath Sounds' radio station. Others serve cake and gifts in the 'Friends of the RUH' café and Atrium shop, or help with the gardening to keep the outside spaces pleasant places to take a break from busy wards. Some also assist with specialist services, such as the spiritual care volunteers and breastfeeding peer supporters.

Canine volunteers like Bob are known as 'Pets as Therapy' (PAT) dogs, who along with their volunteer owners, visit staff and patients throughout the hospital. Their presence is shown to help reduce anxiety, boost mental health and bring comfort to those missing their own furry friends.

Warren Finney, CEO of Friends of the RUH, said: "Volunteers are the life blood of the Friends of the RUH as they bring their time, skills and experience to everything we do. Without them we wouldn't be able to have the impact across the charity's work with patients or run our shop and cafe, which enables us to financially support important projects across the RUH. This includes funding the hospital's musician

in residence, which provides patient-led music interactions with patients of all ages to help recovery, as well as maintaining the gardens as greenspaces, which can have a positive impact on rehabilitation and help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

“The volunteers are amazing, and we are thankful for their support.”

The volunteers don't just support in the hospital: many also help the hospital charity, RUHX, with fundraising events. Rhyannon Boyd, Head of RUHX, said: “Volunteers offer an incredible amount of support to RUHX and the RUH. The support and dedication from volunteers enable us to make our place healthier, happier, and stronger for the future, and help us support the extra extraordinary work that leads to exceptional care for everyone.

“A huge thank you to every single volunteer that has ever given their time, knowledge, or experience to RUHX, we could not do it without you.”

The RUH also supports volunteers considering a career in healthcare. Run in collaboration with St John's Ambulance, the NHS Cadets programme aims to widen access to health volunteering for young people, particularly those who might not have traditionally experienced these opportunities. Another option for some is Volunteer to Career, which helps those considering a career in healthcare to understand their options, develop their skills and explore which roles might match their skillset. Matthew Davies, who has been providing companionship (and teas and coffees) on the Older Persons Assessment Unit for ten months, explained that after being stuck in a rut, the programme has given him the confidence and experience to pursue a career in care: “Since working here, I've realised that this is where I want to be. I feel like I'm at home.”

One of the RUH's more longstanding volunteers is Andy Edwards, who has been here for ten years and helps in the Emergency Department and Respiratory Ward providing emotional and practical support to patients and their families, as well as staff members. He told us: “You can't underestimate the value that there is in volunteering. You go home at the end of the day and you think 'I'm glad I was able to give some comfort to that'. If you like people, I can't think of a better place to be a volunteer.”

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer at the RUH can [find out more on the RUH website](#).

## 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.

Our new Dyson Cancer Centre brings together many of the RUH's cancer services under one roof to provide a cancer services hub for over 500,000 people in the South West. The centre includes the RUH's oncology, chemotherapy and radiotherapy services, a 22-bed inpatient ward, a dedicated pharmacy, research team and nuclear medicine and physics teams.

A key feature of the new centre is the Macmillan Wellbeing Hub. The three-storey hub provides a welcoming, non-clinical space designed around the needs of patients and their families. It also includes comfortable accommodation where relatives and loved ones can stay overnight.

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](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)