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Media Release

Call for women to attend 'lifesaving' cervical screening appointments

A woman who was treated for cervical cancer at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust is calling on others to make sure they take up the offer of a 'lifesaving' cervical screening test.

Carly Brown made the appeal during Cervical Cancer Prevention Week 2026 (19 – 25 January), a national campaign to highlight the importance of cervical cancer screenings and the symptoms of this type of cancer.

Cervical screening, often known as a smear test, is a test to check the health of the cervix and help prevent cervical cancer. All women aged 25 to 64 are invited for cervical screening every five years. Everyone with a cervix should be offered screening.

Carly, from Devizes, was just 32 when she was diagnosed. She said: "I kept putting off having a cervical screening test. I just didn't want to know and I kept telling myself I was too young to get this type of cancer.

"Looking back now I can't believe how naive I was."

Carly had experienced a change in her monthly periods. "I just dismissed it though. I thought it was probably just down to my age and having had kids," said the mum-of-two.

"It was when I started to have heavy bleeding that I just knew I couldn't put it off anymore so I contacted my GP and they got me straight in for a screening.

"I'm not sure why I was ever worried about the actual appointment. It's such a simple test, really quick and it didn't hurt at all."

Following her GP appointment, Carly was referred to the RUH for further tests and a biopsy.

“I was still in denial at that point, but I remember I did have that feeling of dread about what was to come.

“When I received the call from the RUH with the news that it was cancer I just burst into tears. I just didn’t know what I was going to do.”

Treatment began quickly and Carly received five weeks of chemotherapy followed by five weeks of radiotherapy.

“Once treatment started I was actually really positive,” she said. “I decided I was going to do whatever was needed to beat this.

“The treatment was exhausting but it was over within three months. The side effects stay with you for a while though, as does the mental impact, which takes a lot longer to get over. I also faced going into medical menopause, which brings its own challenges and complications.

“I can’t fault the RUH at all – the care, support and compassion I was shown was fantastic the whole way through.

“Being told I was cancer free was amazing, unbelievable. I just can’t describe how wonderful it was to get that news.”

Now aged 35, Carly still returns to the RUH every three months for further check-ups.

“My message to women is please don’t put off having your cervical screening. It really is such a simple, straightforward test and genuinely could save your life – the earlier something is picked up, the quicker you can get treatment and the better your outcome is likely to be.

“Also, if something doesn’t feel right, make sure you ask for an appointment. If there’s one thing I’ve learnt, it’s that you can’t get time back – make time to attend those appointments and get the ‘I’d rather not know’ looked at.

“Overall I feel very fortunate that things worked out so well for me. If I’d continued to put off having a screening it could have been very different.

“I hope my experience will show women the importance of going to those appointments and not ignoring symptoms – early detection really could save your life.”

There are 3,300 new cases of cervical cancer each year in the UK.

If you are a trans man or non-binary and have a cervix, you can speak to your GP, sexual health clinic or transgender health clinic about getting invitations routinely.

For more information about cervical cancer, its symptoms and treatments, visit the NHS website - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer/>

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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