

10<sup>th</sup> June 2010

## Media Release

### **Specialist service celebrates five years of helping people with chronic condition**

A specialist service for adults with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (CFS/ME) is celebrating five years of treating people with this often complex condition.

Anne Johnson and Nikie Catchpool, both Advanced Practitioner Occupational Therapists and joint service leads, set up the Bath and Wiltshire Adult CFS/ME service at the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases NHS Foundation Trust, also known as the Min, after a successful bid to Department of Health's CFS/ME Service Investment Programme in 2005.

Little is known about why people develop CFS/ME but it is a relatively common condition affecting 1 in 250 adults across the UK.

The most common symptoms are persistent fatigue, problems with memory and concentration and muscle pain.

"CFS can have a dramatic effect on a person's life to the point that even the simple everyday tasks that many of us take for granted, such as washing or making a meal, can leave people exhausted." explains Nikie.

Although there is no known cure for CFS/ME, the specialist team at the Min aims to give people the skills they need to be able to manage their symptoms more effectively so they have less of an impact on their everyday lives.

"The aim of our service is to work with the person in order to establish recognised management strategies and enable them to engage in meaningful activities that enhance their quality of life." continued Nikie.

"We are really proud of what we have achieved over the past five years." added Anne.

"We had a vision to help as many people as we could, and we have established a well-respected successful service to help adults who suffer with this condition."

During the five years the team has been established they have assessed and treated almost 1,000 patients from across the UK. The team also offer support to patients on work and education related issues.

"Many of our patients are struggling to either stay in education or employment, and we can work with them to help get them back into the workplace through a carefully developed return to work programme when appropriate." said Nikie.

It is testament to the team that they have successfully recruited seven patient educators, people who have CFS/ME and have been through the service at the Min, who share their experiences with other patients currently being treated by the service to demonstrate how the management strategies can be effectively implemented and have a positive impact on their lives.

David Melvin, from Melksham, suffers with CFS and has benefited from expertise at the Min.

“The advice and knowledge and help that I have received from the team has been really beneficial in helping me effectively manage my ME to a level that has enabled me to remain at work and lead a normal a life as possible. Being able to do that has been a tremendous help to not only myself but also my family.

“My condition still presents me with difficulties and challenges but having the knowledge and confidence and now some experience to know how to best respond to this is really beneficial.”

He went on to say “A good part of coping relies upon self-management and the team have helped equip me with the tools to do that.”

Heather Sharman from Frome, has also benefit from the teams’ expertise

“I had suffered with CFS for a long time and not really had much support to help me to cope with it. I head about the service through Action for ME and I went and asked my GP to refer me.

“I felt very emotional that I was finally getting someone that listened and cared. The best thing about the service is that I know if I have any problems I can call the service and get help, they are really supportive.

“I can now live comfortably within my restrictions. They are a lovely team, always so happy and supportive and caring. They have helped me so much.”

The team marked the occasion with an anniversary party to celebrate the event with colleagues and people who have benefited from the specialist treatment provided by the team.

## **ENDS**

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### **Notes for Editors:**

- The RNHRD NHS FT is a national specialist rehabilitation and rheumatology hospital based in bath. Offering services to adults, children and young people the Trust has expertise in general and complex:
  - Rheumatological and musculoskeletal conditions
  - Neurological rehabilitation
  - Chronic pain management
  - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME
- [www.rnhrd.nhs.uk](http://www.rnhrd.nhs.uk)
- The service at the Min is part of a national network of clinical services. The team treat people from 18 years, and also work with their colleagues in the Paediatric team to deliver transitional services for those who are moving from young people to adult services. The team also provides assessment and treatment to people in their own home if they are severely affected by the condition.
- Patients are given an individual treatment plan, and therapy is delivered by a multi disciplinary team on an individual and group basis.