Prince William visits Basingstoke hospital

PRINCE William met with armed forces veterans who have gone on to secure jobs at Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust when he paid a visit to Basingstoke hospital.

The Duke of Cambridge visited Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital to hear about the progress of the Step into Health programme, which gives servicemen and women the opportunity to experience a new career in the NHS.

Hampshire Hospitals is one of just five trusts in England taking part in the scheme at the moment and the Duke of Cambridge was keen to hear how things are going.

He met servicemen and women preparing for life after the forces by attending an information day about Step into Health run by HHFT, as well as speaking with veterans like Chris Elston and Ronnie Waugh, who have come through the scheme.

Chris spent 24 years in the navy, during which time he trained to be a nurse and worked in a field hospital in Afghanistan. He left the service last year and his expertise is now being put to good use at Hampshire Hospitals, where he works as an infusion devices nurse.

“I have benefitted from Step into Health a great deal,” he said. “I have gained confidence and had people I can go to for advice about career development. Sometimes, I’ve just needed somebody to go and talk to and it’s been absolutely brilliant.

“Prince William put me totally at ease and made me feel like I was the centre of attention. I really felt like I had his complete concentration when I was talking and he has a really easy way of speaking to people.”

Ronnie spent 27 years in the army before being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and recommended for discharge last November. He has since carried out work placements as a porter with Hampshire Hospitals, helping him to rebuild his confidence.

Ronnie said: “I was lucky enough to meet a few members of the royal family during my time in the army, but it was really good to be able to talk to Prince William about the Step into Health programme, because it’s wonderful.

“The placement has given me so much more self-confidence and belief in myself. All of the staff and managers at the trust have been really good to me. I told them about my issues and they took them on board and did all they could to help me.”

But it wasn’t just former members of the military who got the chance to meet Prince William as he made his way around the hospital, with the Duke making a number of unscheduled stops to chat to members of staff and patients.
Among the people surprised by his visit was seven-year-old Anna Kape. Anna, who was in hospital with a broken arm and a missing front tooth, got the chance to chat to the Prince when he spotted her waiting in the corridor to see him pass.

“He asked me if the tooth fairy would be coming,” she said, while her mother, Stephanie, added: “We had no idea he would be here. It was very unexpected but great that he stopped to speak to Anna.”

Step into Health is a joint initiative set up by the NHS, Walking with the Wounded and the Royal Foundation, of which Prince William, the Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry are patrons. It aims to help servicemen and women to find jobs outside of the armed forces, providing work placements, support and advice.

Mary Edwards, chief executive of Hampshire Hospitals, is well aware of the qualities that former servicemen and women bring to the NHS.

“Forces personnel bring strong dedication, commitment, team ethic and a can-do attitude,” she explained. “They can make decisions and understand coping at speed. All of those things are vital in hospitals.

“We were delighted to welcome Prince William to Basingstoke hospital. All of our staff across the three hospitals that we run feel so proud that Prince William has chosen to come and visit our trust.”

ENDS

Photos:
Prince William (Arrival) – Prince William speaks to Basingstoke hospital staff as he arrives
Prince William (Anna Kape) – Seven-year-old patient Anna Kape gets her chance to speak to Prince William
Prince William (Chris Elston) – Prince William with (l-r) Kofi Quartey, Zena Luddick, Chris Elston and Russell Cooper from Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Prince William (Ronnie Waugh) – Prince William speaks to (l-r) Ronnie Waugh, Lee Kinrade and Jeff Avenall

Notes to Editors

1. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides hospital services to a population of approximately 600,000 people in Hampshire and parts of West Berkshire.
2. HHFT has around 6,000 staff and a turnover of £353 million a year.
3. HHFT delivers one hospital service across multiple locations including its own hospitals, Andover War Memorial Hospital, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital and Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester. It also provides outpatient and assessment services from Bordon and Alton community hospitals.
4. As a Foundation Trust, HHFT is accountable to the local community through a system of local ownership with members and elected governors. HHFT has around 18,000 staff and public members. Foundation Trusts are free from central government control and can reinvest any surplus to develop clinical services. They are authorised and regulated by NHS Improvement, an independent regulator.

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