

15<sup>th</sup> April 2013

### **Special guests open sensory room at hospital**

Waybuloo characters Yojojo and De Li joined patients and staff on the Children's Ward at Russells Hall Hospital to mark the grand opening of a brand new sensory room.

The Cbeebies characters joined Chief Executive of The Dudley Group, Paula Clark, patients, relatives and Trust staff to mark the special occasion.

The specialist room, which encourages sensory development and provides young patients with a relaxing environment, has been funded entirely by donations from the local community as part of a £25,000 appeal.

"This is such a fantastic and well needed addition to our play provision for patients on Children's Ward. We are all so pleased to finally see it completed," said Paula.

The sensory room features a cushioned floor and is filled with specialist toys and equipment. It can be used by ward patients and their families under the supervision of one of the ward's play specialists.

The appeal was organised by play specialists Linda Taylor, Ruth Russell, Julie Dale and Mary Williams who wanted to improve the hospital's provision for patients with additional learning needs.

Linda said, "We've always catered very well for most of our children but realised that we had very little that was specifically targeted towards our patients with more complex play needs."

"But even though it was our patients with additional needs that we initially had in mind, the room will be incredibly beneficial to all the children. It's obviously ideal for sensory development but also gives them a lovely place to relax or just spend some time alone."

"From day one the local community have been absolutely amazing — people have been so generous and so many people have done so much for us.

"The local press deserve a special thank you, they have been there to help us spread the word every step of the way and without their help we wouldn't have been able to raise what we have."

Ruth Russell added, "We've all worked very hard to get here and it has been a long journey but we're finally here now and it feels fantastic!

“We know what a difference having this room will make, not only to our patients but also to their families.”

The opening ceremony which saw CBeebies characters Yojojo and De Li pay a visit to the ward was organised by hospital volunteer Steve Ford. He contacted Westfield Merry Hill and persuaded them to let the ward borrow the characters for a couple of hours.

Steve said, “Because of the dedication everyone has put into this I couldn’t have let the opening ceremony be anything less than fantastic.

“The commitment and energy the play specialists have put in to creating the sensory room is amazing and it really is a much needed room that will be invaluable to the ward.”

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For more information contact Alice Ford, Communications Assistant, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust on (01384) 456111 extension 1419.