

## **MEDIA RELEASE/Photo opportunity**

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### **Back to the shop floor – to ask people: ‘Are you OK today?’**



Volunteers at last year's RUOK? Day outside Leicester's Clock Tower and Haymarket Shopping Centre.

Shoppers in Leicester's Highcross Shopping Centre will be asked to put friendship on their shopping lists this weekend.

Volunteers from the NHS, police, public and third sector organisations will be in the centre and on nearby Church Gate this Saturday, asking people: "Are you OK?" and encouraging them to ask the same of their friends and family.

The aim is to get them thinking about small acts – such as a kind word, question or gesture – that could help to lift the mood of someone whose mood might be low.

This will be the fourth RUOK? event and the second in the city centre. Previous events, on Leicester Railway station in October 2015 and 2016 and at Leicester's Clock Tower and Haymarket Shopping Centre last May, have seen more than 7,000 people engaged in conversations and more than 70 people given further support from trained advisers.

Organisations behind the campaign include Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT), Leicestershire Police, Network Rail, Railway Mission, Samaritans, LAMP, Healthwatch, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, and Richmond Fellowship.

Volunteers from the organisations will be encouraging shoppers to sign a pledge wall, promising to take positive steps to support their own and other people's emotional wellbeing.

The volunteers will be offered information, including business cards signposting them to the RUOK website <http://ruoktoday.co.uk> which outlines the aims of the campaign, provides information about sources of support and features a film of last October's event on Leicester railway station.

Event co-ordinator Matthew Wakely, a mental health team manager from LPT, said: "As we have had RUOK? events several times now, people are saying to us they remember us from last time and still have the card they were given a year ago, we have also seen an increase in interest as the RUOK? venture has developed.

"We are hoping that Saturday will be another opportunity for people to respond to the



question RUOK, we also want people to make a pledge on our pledge wall, it could be a promise to do something for themselves or someone else, like make a phone call, visit someone or send a text "RUOK?"

"The most precious thing we can give someone is time."

- Matthew, (pictured at October's Leicester station event) and his colleague Kate Sothcott-Gilson, a physical health nurse at the Bradgate mental health unit in Leicester, will be tackling a 100-mile cycle ride

this summer to help fund future RUOK? events.

They will be riding across London and Surrey as part of the Ride London challenge on 30 July in a bid to raise £650 each. You can support Kate at

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/K-Sothcott-gilson> and Matthew at <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MatthewWakely>

### **Judith's Story:**

Education welfare officer and RUOK? volunteer Judith Critchley, 40, knows from personal experience that the support of friends, family and colleagues is invaluable in supporting wellbeing.

Judith, from Oadby, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when she was 17 and says she coped with her condition completely alone from the age of 19 to 35

She says: From the age of 17-35 I kept my bipolar disorder hidden from myself and I had not fully accepted my condition and its effect on me and my family and



friends.

“I had periods where I was hypomanic and times where I was utterly exhausted from these times of intense activity.”

With medical support, she now self-manages her mental wellbeing. She says: “A huge difference now is that I am open about my mental health to family, friends and work colleagues. I can talk with them and get support when needed. So much so I am now a mental health campaigner and fundraiser.”

Today Judith chairs a work-based mental health wellbeing group providing support to her public sector colleagues.

She says: “We meet, listen and support each other. My colleagues at work are very supportive and check in with me daily to see how I am. They are always willing to offer support. My department has received training on bipolar disorder and so they are aware of what it is and how to support me,

“I have a really good network of friends, family and my partner all support me and encourage me with the challenges I face”.

“I feel it’s so important that friends and family ask how I am. I’m OK - most of the time – and the wellbeing group members agree that having that support makes them feel stronger. If you’re not feeling great and someone listens without judgement, it’s a help.”

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides community health, mental health and learning disabilities services for the one million people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a budget in excess of £275 million and employ approximately 5,500 staff. For more information visit: [www.leicspart.nhs.uk](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk).

2. Raising Health is our registered charity (number 1057361) which raises funds to support LPT’s excellent care initiatives, equipment and innovations which go above and beyond core NHS provision, to enhance the experience of our patients, service users and staff. [www.raisinghealth.org.uk](http://www.raisinghealth.org.uk)

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