

MEDIA RELEASE/photo and interview opportunity

Leicester Railway Station

Thursday 12 October 7am – 7pm

R U OK? Volunteers ask a question for mental wellbeing

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Rail passengers urged to ‘be a friend, ask RUOK’

Volunteers from health, police, public and third sector organisations will be back on Leicester railway station on Thursday 12 October, asking commuters: “RU OK?” for the third year.



The aim is to get people thinking about the small acts – a kind word, question or gesture – that can help to lift the mood of a friend, family member, colleague or acquaintance.

On Thursday commuters will be offered information including free business cards signposting them to the RUOK website <http://ruoktoday.co.uk/> which

outlines the aims of the campaign and provides information about sources of support.

The RUOK? Campaign is a partnership of health, police, rail, local authority and third sector organisations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Previous events on the station and in Leicester City Centre have seen a total of more than 6,000 people receiving business cards and engaged in 30-second conversations, around 40 people receiving support on the day from trained advisers, and hundreds signing a ‘pledge wall’ promising to say or do something to support their own or someone else’s emotional wellbeing. **(See Sam’s story below)**

This year [a song](#) has been written for the campaign. It was written by the Look-A-Lady Ukulele Ladies, a group of women from different cultural backgrounds brought together through LPT’s arts in health service using music to boost wellbeing.

Event co-ordinator Matthew Wakely, a mental health team manager from LPT, said: “The idea of asking RU OK? Is simple but it can have a huge positive impact on someone’s wellbeing. We are aiming to raise awareness of how all of us can be aware of how people around us are feeling and how people can support each other.

“I know from personal experience recently how we benefit from people asking if we are OK.”

- Matthew and his colleague Kate Sothcott-Gilson, a physical health nurse at the Bradgate mental health unit, raised more than £1,500 to support RUOK? Resources by cycling across London and Surrey as part of the Ride London challenge in July.

Among the supporters of the campaign are Leicestershire County Council’s cabinet member for health, Councillor Ernie White who commented: “Awareness events such as RUOK? are really positive steps towards helping people to support their own emotional wellbeing and that support can extend to others too. We’re delighted to be joining with partners for the initiative taking place at Leicester station.”

The public is encouraged to get behind the campaign on social media by downloading a [pledge ‘brick’](#), making their own RUOK pledges and posting a ‘selfie’ with their pledge using the hashtag #RUOKLLR

Partners in the campaign include Leicestershire Police, Network Rail, Railway Mission, Samaritans, LAMP, Healthwatch, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, and Richmond Fellowship. You can find out more at

www.ruoktoday.co.uk



Sam’s story

One of the volunteers supporting RUOK? on Thursday is businesswoman Sam Houghton, 47, who has lived with anxiety and depression for more than 30 years. An unsettled early life led to her being prescribed anti-depressants at the age of 15, and she struggled to cope with school, college and later the workplace.

After a number of hospital admissions and treatment for an eating disorder her life finally started to turn around after the birth of her son in her late 20s.

Although she still struggled with depression and low self-esteem, Sam went on to train as a wellbeing mentor. She now shares her own story to help support others with their emotional wellbeing.

She says: “In my teens I sought the help of the Samaritans and if they hadn’t been there for me then, I don’t think I could have turned my life around.

“I feel it’s so important for us all to make connections with others. If you feel upset, feeling on your own just intensifies it. Having someone to reach out to is so powerful and sometimes it’s better if that someone isn’t one of those closest to you.

Sam will be one of the volunteers supporting the RUOK? event.”

- The Samaritans offer free support any time, from any phone on 116 123. This number is free. You don't have to be suicidal to call.

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For further information/interview requests contact: Sheila Ashton, communications manager, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Tel: 0116 295 0042, E: sheila.ashton@leicspart.nhs.uk

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

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