



Press Release

Immediate Release

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## **Cygnet Transforms Clinical Space into 'Homely' Social Hub for Blackburn Patients**

Arcade games, sensory lighting, neon signs and pool tables are just some of the equipment which has helped to transform a clinical space at a Blackburn hospital which supports men with severe mental health needs.

Service users at Cygnet Fountains, a high support inpatient rehabilitation service for men who have severe and enduring mental illness, now have access to a homely environment – named 'Social Hub' - away from the wards after an unused space in the hospital was given a stunning makeover in an effort to provide service users with a safe space where they could relax and socialise together.

The Social Hubs have been designed and installed across more than a dozen Cygnet Health Care services so far and all have been co-produced between staff and patients, with more to come.

Co-production is an integral part of the culture at Cygnet and the social hubs came about following feedback from patients who said they would benefit from having non-clinical rooms to wind down in.

Working from a wish list of items provided by service users, a team of staff and Experts by Experience (those with lived experience of inpatient settings) worked together to spend a day at the Cygnet Health Care service on Pleasington Close, Blackburn, transforming an otherwise empty room into a brand new space featuring games consoles, arcade machines, sensory lighting and a newly clothed pool table.

The idea is that the social hubs offer a non-clinical, homely space for service users to relax and engage in fun activities and peer support sessions, giving them a safe space away from the wards.

Service users were placed at the heart of the project from the very beginning and were escorted to a local shopping centre so they could be directly involved in choosing the items that were bought for the hub, giving them a further sense of ownership of the project.

Serena Birtwistle, Cygnet Fountains Hospital Manager, said: "Social Hubs play a vital role within mental health services, they provide a safe, non-clinical, homely space for patients to relax and 'chill out', reflect, socialise and engage with peers and with the staff team. I believe that feeling confident to participate and engage in social situations is a very important part of recovery both within the service and then following discharge within the community.

"This can be achieved by creating the Social Hubs and then using shared interests such as films, music, gaming and art to bring everyone together.

"We are really pleased to have been offered the opportunity to create a social hub here at Cygnet Fountains, it is something we had already been planning as the patients had requested a 'man cave'.

"The men were involved from start to finish, from choosing and ordering the items to being involved in the installation and helping set the new space up. We decided on an 85 inch state of the art TV and sound system, numerous games consoles and games, several arcade and pinball machines, gaming chairs. This has been complimented by arcade themed furnishings and bright décor.

"We are already seeing the space being utilised frequently and for longer periods, with higher levels of engagement from both patients with their peers and patients/staff.

"The feedback from the patients has been really positive and they are very proud of the space that they have helped to create."

Raf Hamaizia, Cygnet Health Care Expert by Experience Lead, added: "This co-produced project demonstrates how staff and service users can enhance both the built environment and engagement through working together.

"The new social hubs are a great place for service users to get off the wards to relax and socialise, particularly on evenings and weekends.

"We strive to make our services "homes away from homes" and the social hubs have been hugely beneficial for the service users, reducing incidents and providing them with a non-clinical, homely environment to enhance off-ward activities. It is refreshing to see how quickly the hubs are growing and the amazing feedback we are getting from both service users and staff alike."

Raf said the plan is now to expand the social hubs across more Cygnet services, with the ambition for all Cygnet services to have a social hub in place.

He added: "It has been a real journey of co-production and sharing best practice between sites to enhance therapeutic environments and meaningful activity to support recovery.

"The ultimate benefit is the service user who has a place to do what they want to do, that they feel invested in from co-creating, that doesn't feel clinical or hospital like. It helps them in working back towards creating a sense of self, connectedness and ultimately recovery. It also provides reassurance to families when seeing this

space and knowing their loved one is not in an institution but a place that they even rate themselves.

“For service users, social hubs are a reflection of their voice being heard; we've listen and we've acted on it.

“It is fun and relaxing not only for service users but everyone, staff and managers are over the moon too, we all feel invested in this space and are excited to see how this space will make a positive difference on so many levels, from enhancing engagement on evenings and weekend, to having a place where service users can relax and socialise.

“Seeing the reaction on people's faces has been priceless, both service users and staff alike.”

Cygnnet is a health and social care company which provides services for young people and adults with mental health needs, acquired brain injuries, eating disorders, autism and learning disabilities.

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