Press Release

Immediate Release

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Blackburn Resident Makes a Splash for Charity

A Blackburn resident who has struggled with mental health problems for many years has taken on an epic swimming challenge to help other people in the community who are also struggling with mental ill health.

Ben, a service user at Vincent Court, the step-down service for Cygnet Fountains, a Cygnet Health Care rehabilitation service for men who have severe and enduring mental illness in Blackburn, has been participating in a sponsored swim to raise funds for the mental health charity Mind.

He has swum over 1,000 lengths and has raised over £500 for Mind, the charity which supports those struggling mentally.

To celebrate this, Cygnet Health Care Hospital Manager Serena Birtwistle and Occupational Therapy Assistant Sarah Riding assisted Ben in holding a coffee morning, where he could celebrate his achievement and invite his family and friends.

Ben said: "I took on the challenge of swimming 16 miles in August to raise money for Mind. I wanted to give back to the community and help others who have struggled with mental health issues like me.

"I have faced mental health challenges for many years and have spent a lot of time in hospitals and places of safety.

"I moved to Cygnet Fountains 20 months ago and then to Vincent Court, a community step-down house that is part of Cygnet Health Care, earlier this year. With the support of the doctors and staff, as well as using coping strategies I've learned, I now feel happier and more in control of my life.

"Because my mental health had improved, I decided to focus on my physical health; even walking downstairs was difficult for me. However, the staff at Vincent Court supported me by planning nutritious meals, batch-cooking them, and helping me make better food choices. I started to limit takeaways, manage portion sizes, and set weekly goals.

“Over time, I became motivated to exercise regularly and gradually developed a routine. I stopped relying on taxis and started walking everywhere. I also began to enjoy healthier meals and replaced fizzy drinks with water.

“As things got easier, I lost a significant amount of weight, and I started going to the gym and swimming five days a week at 6am. I set a goal to swim a mile a day for 16 days, which I have now completed.”

To mark the occasion, staff at Cygnet Fountains organised a BBQ to help Ben raise even more money for the charity.

“I know mental health can be a lifetime illness for some people, and the struggles can be overwhelming, but staying positive, choosing healthy options and doing activities, even on bad days, can make things seem a little brighter,” Ben added.

Sarah Riding, Cygnet Health Care Occupational Therapy Assistant, said: "Ben has worked so hard to get to where he is now. He also motivates his peers to push themselves and have more structure and routine.

“Ben's journey has not been easy; however, through pure strength and determination, he has reached his goals and changed his mindset. He has also, in the process, raised a large amount of money for charity and has put so much effort into this, which has not been easy but has been a testament to Ben's determination and progress.

“It has been a pleasure supporting Ben with his fundraising, and I am looking forward to seeing what else Ben achieves, as I know there is much more to come."

Ends