



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Bristol International Nurse Speaks Out on International Nurses Day

A Filipino nurse working in a Bristol mental health hospital has spoken about adjusting to life in the UK and how proud she feels to contribute to the UK healthcare community as part of International Nurses Day.

Joni Abellana, originally from the Philippines, has been a nurse for more than 15 years and started at Cygnet Health Care in October 2022. For the past seven years she has worked in the United Arab Emirates and now works at Cygnet Brunel, on Crow Lane, Henbury, which provides neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative rehabilitation for men with mental health difficulties and acquired brain injuries.

Talking about what inspired her into a nursing career Joni said: *"It may sound cliché but I started to have a passion with caring for people at a very young age. Initially I wanted to become a doctor but I have no regrets becoming a nurse. I gained not just personal but professional growth and development."*

As part of Cygnet's international recruitment policy, nurses will have a minimum of 2 years current psychiatric nursing experience. All are registered nurses in their country of origin. This could be a diploma in nursing or a bachelor of nursing dependent on the country.

Any nurse put forward to a site will have a minimum score of 7 in the IELTS (International English Language Test) and all nurses will have had Occupational Health Checks during the screening process.

International nurses enjoy a benefits package including a £2,000 welcome bonus at the end of their first week, Visa, Immigration Health Surcharge & Certificate of Sponsorship for 3 years paid for, as well as flights and transfers from the UK airport to accommodation paid for. Additionally, a house deposit and their first month rent paid is paid for, as well as their OSCE training and exam.

Cygnet sponsor international nurses for three years with the option to apply for another two. After five years a nurse can be eligible for indefinite leave to remain.

Joni admitted that adjusting to a new country can be difficult and brings certain challenges.

She added: *"Clearing the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) was a bit of a challenge, but with the support of Cygnet, I was able to pass the exam at the first attempt. That has definitely been my proudest achievement so far."*

"I find the people at work and in the UK generally to be very polite and approachable which somehow made it easier for me to adjust to the culture and the environment.

"The induction process is crucial to helping international nurses settle to their new environment. It was a great experience to shadow and work alongside experienced nurses who were accommodating and have offered great support as I adjust to my new role. Cygnet really encourage a culture of asking questions so the nurse feels safe to ask about things they are unsure about."

Talking about the biggest differences between working as a nurse in the UK and the Philippines, Joni said: *"I can honestly say that I have never felt safer and more secure than I feel practicing my profession here. With the UK's laws, tolerance and equality, I am more free to express my concerns to better cater to the patient's needs. I feel that I am a valued member of the team working as a nurse in the UK.*

"I always say that a greatest accomplishment a nurse can have is when a patient shows his or her gratitude to you. A simple saying such as "thanks to you" is a great fulfilment, knowing that somehow, you have touched someone's life and that you have made a difference."

Offering her advice for anyone considering relocating to another country for their career, Joni shared: *"You have to be ready, not just physically but also mentally and emotionally. You need to become whole as a person to take care of people and be willing to learn and demonstrate resilience every day. Do not forget to look after yourself so you can be best placed to be effective in your practice."*

Ends

Notes to Editors:

For more information, please contact Gemma Attew, External Communications Manager, on gemmaattew@cygnethealth.co.uk or 07718 244811.

About Cygnet Health Care

Cygnet Health Care has been providing a national network of high-quality, specialised mental health services for the NHS and local authorities for the past 30 years.

Cygnet Health Care's pioneering services support people with complex and acute mental health needs across the UK.

As one of the best quality providers in mental health services in the country, Cygnet Health Care's focus is always on the best outcomes for those who use or commission its services. 85% of Cygnet's facilities are rated as good or outstanding, which is above the national average.

www.cygnethealth.co.uk

