



Press Release

Immediate Release

20 June 2023

Huddersfield Resident Shares Achievements as Part of Learning Disabilities Week

A Huddersfield resident with a learning disability wants others to know about his achievements as part of the campaign to smash misconceptions about what people can do this Learning Disabilities Week.

Chris Bowman, 30, is a resident at Yorkshire Supported Living where each week he attends the Education Project at Oxley Woodhouse. Run by Cygnet Social Care, the project offers a diverse range of activities at different learning levels. Residents are able to interact with a number of different resources to aid their learning, within a safe and relaxing environment.

This week is Learning Disabilities Week and the aim is to show the world the incredible things that people with a learning disability achieve, smashing misconceptions about what people can do and shining a light on the stigma many still face every day. Chris, who has mild learning disability was also diagnosed with epilepsy at 15 years old. He has been a resident with Cygnet Social Care since 2021.

He said: "I think people may believe that those of us with a learning disability can't live independently.

"But they can. I'm in supported living and doing everything independently and that makes me feel so happy. I can go to the shops on my own, go to the café by myself and generally just look after myself."

Chris added: "The staff here keep me safe and they support me, helping me when I need it. But I enjoy doing things on my own, there's no better feeling than being independent.

"It makes me proud to know how far I've come in terms of my independent living."

Through the Education Project, Chris is in the process of achieving an AQA qualification as part of its Unit Award Scheme (UAS) which allows all students to engage with learning and have their achievements formally recognised.

Students are rewarded with a certificate each time they successfully complete a unit of learning. They can build up a portfolio of certificates to evidence their skills, knowledge

and experience. The scheme boosts confidence, increases engagement and improves motivation, helping students to make progress on their lifelong learning journey.

He is studying Maths and English as well as topics such as understanding money, food safety and hygiene and personal care.

"Everything I am learning through the Education Project is helping me with my goal of living on my own," he explained. "I'm learning to cook, how to do my own washing and laundry and it is building my confidence every day.

"I'm learning new things all the time."

Iain Winstanley is the Education Project manager. He explained: "It is entirely service user focused so each person has an individual learning plan. As well as the qualification side, it is also about social skills and building confidence being around peers.

"We make it personal to each resident and their learning levels. Some might be learning motor skills, others can be GCSE level or primary school age. Either way, everyone works together. It is such a privilege knowing the work I do help them achieve their goals."

The purpose of Learning Disabilities week is to educate people and raise awareness about learning disabilities, and also it is about making sure the world hears what life is like if you have a learning disability.

Iain explained: "I like to think about it by imagining the toy boxes with different shape holes to fit things in. Everybody has the skills to succeed, no matter their learning disability. It's just sometimes their shape doesn't fit the hole. We shouldn't go about trying to change them. Instead we should change the box so they do fit.

"I often get people saying to me, 'I never knew I could do maths or I never knew I could write a sentence.'

"Their skills and achievements surprise a lot of people. It is just about getting their environment right to allow them to flourish."

Ends

Notes to Editors:

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