



Press Release

Immediate Release

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**“My mental health struggles saw me drop out of school at 13
but now I’m a University graduate”**

Mental health struggles meant Liz dropped out of school when she was just 13-years-old. Moved between different inpatient services, her education took a back step. But now the Birmingham woman has battled through her setbacks to become a University graduate.

Liz Evans is a resident at Ashbrook, part of Cygnet Social Care's Staffordshire Supported Living, a 24-hour supported care service which enables residents to progress towards independent living.

Staff joined her celebrations after she successfully completed her Psychology degree at the University of Birmingham. Liz began the university course shortly after becoming a resident at Ashbrook, on Bordesley Green, and she managed to achieve a second class honours degree.

Liz, also a former inpatient at Cygnet Health Care mental health service Cygnet Hospital Harrow, was initially inspired to take up the course in order to get some insight into her own mental health struggles.

She said: “Shortly after I moved to Ashbrook, I began a psychology degree inspired by those around me and I was fascinated by my own brain.

“With so much support, dedication and long nights, supported by my amazing support workers, I have graduated my degree with honours.”

Liz’s achievement is all the more special as she has been in mental health services since the age of 12 and dropped out of full time education aged just 13.

She was diagnosed with Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She transitioned from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to adult services and experienced challenges and setbacks along the way.

Alongside her degree, Liz continued to volunteer regularly giving telephone peer support to others in crisis.

Following her degree success, Liz attended a graduation ceremony at the University of Birmingham and the team at Ashbrook also held a surprise BBQ to celebrate her achievement.

Leanne Squire, Cygnet Social Care Service Manager at Ashbrook, said: "We are so proud of Liz for putting in all the hard work, it has not been an easy journey, as Liz has continued to struggle with her mental health throughout the course.

"She truly is an inspiration to us all, particularly those in a similar position to her."

Liz added: "I want to say a huge thank you to the team at Ashbrook for the motivation, encouragement and support to help me achieve my degree.

"After all these years battling with my mental health, I have learnt to work with staff who helped me to write my care plan and positive behaviour support plan to make sure I had ownership of my care and future. Together at Ashbrook, anything is possible!"

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Notes to Editors:

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