



Press Release

Immediate Release

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### **Vicki wins Hope and Positivity Award at the National Service User Awards 2023**

A service user from a Birmingham care service which supports women with learning disabilities has won the Hope and Positivity Award at this year's National Service User Awards for her work teaching Makaton.

The National Service User Awards are an annual celebration of the achievements of those accessing mental health, learning disability and autism services nationwide. This year the awards ceremony was held in the Treetops Pavilion at the West Midlands Safari Park.

Vicki is a service user at Cygnet Elms, a care service for women with learning disabilities run by Cygnet Social Care. She won the Hope and Positivity Award category, which recognises the power of small actions in making a big difference. It recognised individuals that are consistently looking out for others and spreading hope and positivity.

Vicki was applauded for her work in creating an environment where she could teach others how to use Makaton to communicate with each other. She did this in group settings but also offered 1:1 tutorials as well.

During Autism Awareness Week, Vicki used these sessions to teach people how to sign the colours of the rainbow, as well as other fun things such as songs and catchphrases.

Vicki said: "I am really proud, I'm more proud of the staff and service users who have made this dream a reality because without them I would not be able to teach and raise awareness of Makaton in this type of service.

"It is really overwhelming, but in a really good way. It just makes me feel proud of what I've done and proud of all the patients and staff that I've taught."

On what inspired her to begin teaching Makaton, Vicki said: "I feel like the world should be more accessible to everybody and I really think that even in schools they should teach Makaton rather than foreign languages because people are more likely to meet someone who is deaf, autistic or learning disabled than they are to go to France."

Rebecca Sewell, Occupational Therapist at Cygnet Social Care, said: “Everyone at Cygnet Elms is very proud of what Vicki has achieved. Her Makaton Training has had a real positive impact on the service users and the staff at the service.

“Her knowledge and teaching is helping Elms to become a more inclusive service catering to everyone’s communication needs. It is great that her hard work has been recognised by the National Service User Awards.”

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**Notes to Editors:**

For more information, please contact Gemma Attew, External Communications Manager, on [gemmaattew@cygnethealth.co.uk](mailto:gemmaattew@cygnethealth.co.uk) or 07718 244811.