



Cygnet Impact Report 2022/23

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We are Cygnet Group, a leading provider of social care, complex mental health, learning disability and autism services in the UK. Established in 1988, our 35-year history has seen us build a reputation for delivering pioneering services and outstanding outcomes for children, young people, adults and older people.

Our Purpose

is to make a positive difference to the lives of the individuals we care for, their loved ones and all those who work with us.

Our Vision

is to provide high quality, sustainable specialist services that: Ensure service users and residents feel safe and supported, staff are proud of, commissioners and service users and residents select, and stakeholders.

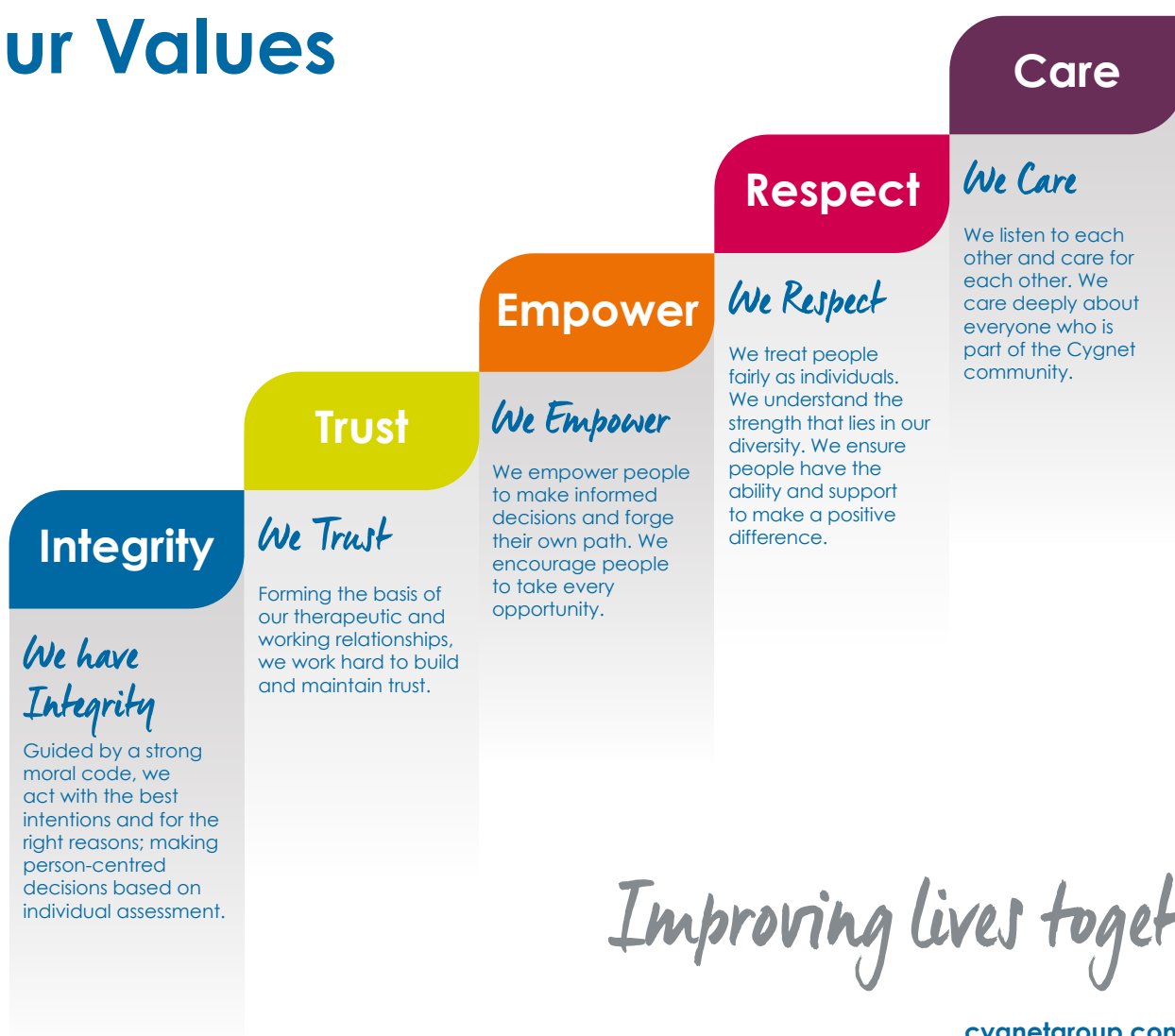
Our Mission

is to work together in a positive culture of openness, honesty and inclusivity, where we deliver safe, compassionate care for our service users and staff enjoy a fulfilling, rewarding environment in which to work.

Our Values

are to care for our service users, staff and visitors, to respect them, to ensure a bond of trust is built among us, to at all times empower those we look after as well as our staff, to deliver quality services with integrity.

Our Values



Improving lives together



Message from our CEO, Dr Tony Romero

This year marks Cygnet's 35th anniversary and I am incredibly proud of how we have grown to help many thousands of people across the country.

With almost 200 services we are the leading provider of mental health, learning disability, autism and social care facilities in the UK.

At Cygnet, it is our commitment that each person we help should have a positive experience of care with outcomes that bring benefit to their unique and individual needs.

There is no doubt the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the nation's physical and mental health. I am proud of the resilience and dedication our staff showed in their unwavering commitment to protecting our service users and keeping each other safe. We adapted services to help meet national need and together we navigated the path out of Covid. Across the health and social care sector we have seen how much can be achieved by teams who work together, adapt and innovate.

Working in collaboration across our services and also extending beyond our organisational boundaries to work with the NHS, social care and key partners, including families and carers, are all key priorities. We look forward to further strengthening these relationships and exploring new opportunities to collaborate in the future so that we can meet the diverse needs of those in our care in the best possible way.

Recognising the distinct offering of our services, we have now split Cygnet into two divisions: Health Care and Social Care. We believe this will give greater recognition to each division, both internally and externally, whilst still carrying our overarching Cygnet name, which is widely recognised and well regarded.

Our regulators also continue to recognise our quality and we are proud that in 2022 we outperformed the national average for services rated Good or Outstanding.* We will keep focussing on this quality and continue to extend our work into the communities we serve - through education outreach, raising awareness and extending our social media networks, where we grew our online following by 24% last year.

We also take our environmental responsibilities very seriously and have invested significantly in projects to help tackle climate change. Our Sustainability Strategy is ambitious and we aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2040.

None of these achievements and ambitions would be possible without our dedicated colleagues. Caring is in our DNA and integral to our culture and values.

In our Health Care services we always strive for our clinical outcomes to exceed the expected standards so people can return home safely. Our social care services provide sanctuary for each individual entrusted to us and I like the saying that: "Our residents don't live in our workplace, we work in their homes."

Indeed, it is our 11,600-strong workforce that are key to our success. They are our magic ingredient. We cherish them and are grateful for all they do.

Never has care been more important and despite many challenges last year, we continued to push forward with optimism and success.

Next year and beyond will see us open new, purpose-built facilities and invest further in our existing services. We are proud to provide services to support the NHS and local authorities and remain focused on delivering high quality, safe care.

*Statistic taken from the State of Care Report.



What We Do

We provide services in England, Scotland and Wales, our expert and highly dedicated team of more than 11,600 employees empower 7,500 individuals across 200 services to consistently make a positive difference to their lives.

Through our values of Integrity, Trust, Empower, Respect and Care we take pride in the services we offer and the outcomes we enable individuals in our care to achieve.

Cygnnet provides a broad coverage of the behavioural health spectrum from Secure, Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), Acute, Mental Health Rehabilitation and Recovery, Personality Disorder, Children and Adolescents, Eating Disorder, Learning Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Neuropsychiatric, Older Adults, Deafness and Mental Health.

Our Clinical Vision

Our aim is to provide the highest quality care to our Service Users and Residents at all times, regardless of where they are in their care pathway.

We are committed to providing the highest quality and most effective care possible.

We aim to achieve this through our highly trained and motivated staff network working in partnership with service users, residents, their friends and relatives, our commissioners, and regulatory bodies.

Testimonials

"The Oaks provided me with a safe and supportive environment where I could receive the necessary treatment and care for my mental health issues. The doctors, nurses, therapists, and other staff members were all highly professional, compassionate, and understanding. They listened to me, understood my needs, and provided me with personalised care that helped me manage my condition effectively."

Former service user

"It is not often that I am lost for words, but I truly cannot find the right ones to express my gratitude for the chance to live again that you have given me."

Former service user

"My daughter has come on so well since being at St Teilo House, she takes part in most things and has gone from having no confidence to being a lady who has more confidence, she takes pride in her appearance. All things we take for granted. She was never able to do those things before."

Parent

"The love, care and devotion to making his life as comfortable and dignified as possible was exceptional. I also felt wrapped in a blanket of love and care from the staff in what was a very difficult time in mine and my son's lives."

Wife

"The work you do is invaluable. The little things really do make all the difference. Our experience at Godden Green was a positive one, even though times were very challenging with our daughter. The building is clean and although secure, it has a homely feel."

Parent

"I cannot express how amazing the staff here are! They saved me from myself and took the responsibility to keep me safe until I could do it for myself. I will never be able to thank them enough for the way they helped me and the huge impact they have had on my life."

Service user

"Cygnnet has been a life changing experience. It has offered me so much which has allowed me to develop skills, insight, confidence and much more. I just wish there were more hospitals like this one. I now feel empowered and ready to live my life."

Service user

"Everyone has their part to play and your department helps make up a great team. Thanks for listening and being there for our daughter. I want to say a big thanks to all the staff for the help and support that they provide, to not only the service users but their friends and families also. It really is appreciated. Thanks for all that you continue to do."

Parent

"I can't begin to express how amazing you have all been. I was in a very dark, difficult place. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Former service user



Experts by Experience Case Study

Experts by Experience are people who have lived experience of using or caring for someone who has used health and / or social care services. In many cases, our Experts by Experience are people who used to be Cygnet service users.

We have long championed and valued co-production across our services, using the voices, views and insight from service users to provide the very highest standards of care.

In 2018, Cygnet became the first independent provider of healthcare services to invest in a full-time Expert by Experience Lead. We now work with more than 300 Experts by Experience to help ensure the opinions of service users are heard and considered across the organisation and that feedback is actioned upon to improve our services.

Former service user and Expert by Experience **Lee Millington-Millar** shares his story and discusses what he hopes to bring to the role to ensure service users have a positive experience with Cygnet services.

"I was admitted to Cygnet Hospital Taunton in the summer of 2021, after years of suffering with severe depression and suicidal thoughts. The hospital provides an acute inpatient service for men, it gave me the help I desperately needed.

For me, it was a gradual build up over years and it all came to a head one night. My mind was in a place that it had never really been before. I was taken by police to a place of safety in Plymouth. Then the next day I was admitted to a hospital in Exeter. It was my first time experiencing anything like this. It was extremely distressing, upsetting and at times, scary. I didn't know what to expect, who I would meet and what would happen to me.

Soon after I was transferred to Cygnet Hospital Taunton, where I was met by a couple of really nice and pleasant staff when I arrived. I was very quiet and unsure for the first few days and spent most of my time in my room. Over the next few days I socialised more. My psychology sessions opened my eyes to the fact I really needed help. The psychologists helped me understand how I felt and process the thoughts that were going through my head. They gave me the tools to better understand myself and overcome the thoughts that I was having.



The Occupational Therapy team helped me get involved on the ward with activities and brought me out of my shell. The ward staff were great, and I made some great bonds with the service users as well. We understood one another. By the time I left I felt like I was on the road to recovery. It's a long journey but to wake up in the morning and enjoy my life again has been invaluable to me.

Yet I vividly remember how powerless and resentful I felt at the time of my admission. It is that memory that spurs me on now to want to help others. I can be a beacon of hope for people who are currently in the pit of despair. That's something I take incredibly seriously.

In the summer of 2022 I was told about the role of Expert by Experience by the Hospital Manager. I was invited back to the service and met a couple of staff members who had helped me during my stay. I felt like it was a beneficial role for service users and it was empowering to know I could be responsible for improving their care and getting their voices heard. I also felt that it would help me and give me a sense of meaning and purpose.

I want to speak up for people who don't have a voice. When you're in a mental health service, sometimes you just don't have the strength in yourself to speak up about what you need. I've been there and I know what helps and what hinders. I want to share that expertise to help get others into a good place."

"My role is primarily focused around peer support. I talk to patients and their families within three of Cygnet Health Care's services in the South West. I have walked in their shoes and that helps to build up trust between us. They feel safe talking to me. It was empowering going back and stepping into the hospital as a member of staff. It sends a strong message to people still in treatment that it can be done. I got through it and it's possible for other people to do the same. It was the biggest marker of my recovery when I stepped foot into the hospital in my new role. I'm finally in a place where I feel I can make a difference."

"I love every minute of it. With the regular visits I do, I can see the changes and improvements of the service users through their journeys at the sites. To see them at the start of their journey and to be a tiny part of that process is really fulfilling.

I feel like I have connected with some of the service users across the sites. I have tried to get their points across and their opinions listened to. They have some great ideas, including one service user who is running an IT course for other patients and even some staff. To give the service users this empowerment and make them feel like they can be a constructive part of the process is so helpful.

Seeing the staff in a different way has been eye opening too. When I was first admitted my judgment was clouded by the way I was feeling. It was hard for me to see how the staff could help me. I didn't really recognise the efforts they were going to, to support me. Now I'm in a better place, I can see the patience and kindness they showed. They truly care and are passionate about their jobs.

They treat service users with respect and always try to do their best for them. I can give that reassurance to service users who are filled with the same doubts I was.

As former service users who have experienced receiving care first hand, we are in the unique position of being able to drive real change and make a huge difference to so many people.

I do feel a big responsibility because this role has the potential to be incredibly powerful. Being able to sit down with a service user and tell them you've been through what they are experiencing, and that you understand the place they are coming from is a real privilege. You see the moment their shoulders relax when they realise you have shared experiences.

As the role develops, I know I'll be able to help more people. I also hope to connect with other Experts by Experience to collaborate and share learning so that our network of support can benefit even more people and raise greater understanding of mental health."

Who We Are

Cygnnet in Numbers

6 of our inpatient mental health services are accredited with AIMS-Rehab and AIMS – Working Age



More than **60** of our Social Care services have achieved their Dignity in Care Award



6 of our PICU, Acute and Secure Services have been accredited with Star Wards



www.dignityincare.org.uk



100% of our schools in Child and Adolescent (CAMHS) facilities are rated 'Good' by OFSTED



6 Cygnnet Hospitals rolled out the Triangle of Care (Carer Trust). Cygnnet are the first independent provider accepted into the Triangle of Care Membership programme



4 of our Neuropsychiatric services are Headway Accredited

100% CAMHS services are members and / or are accredited with the Quality Network for inpatient CAMHS (QNIC)



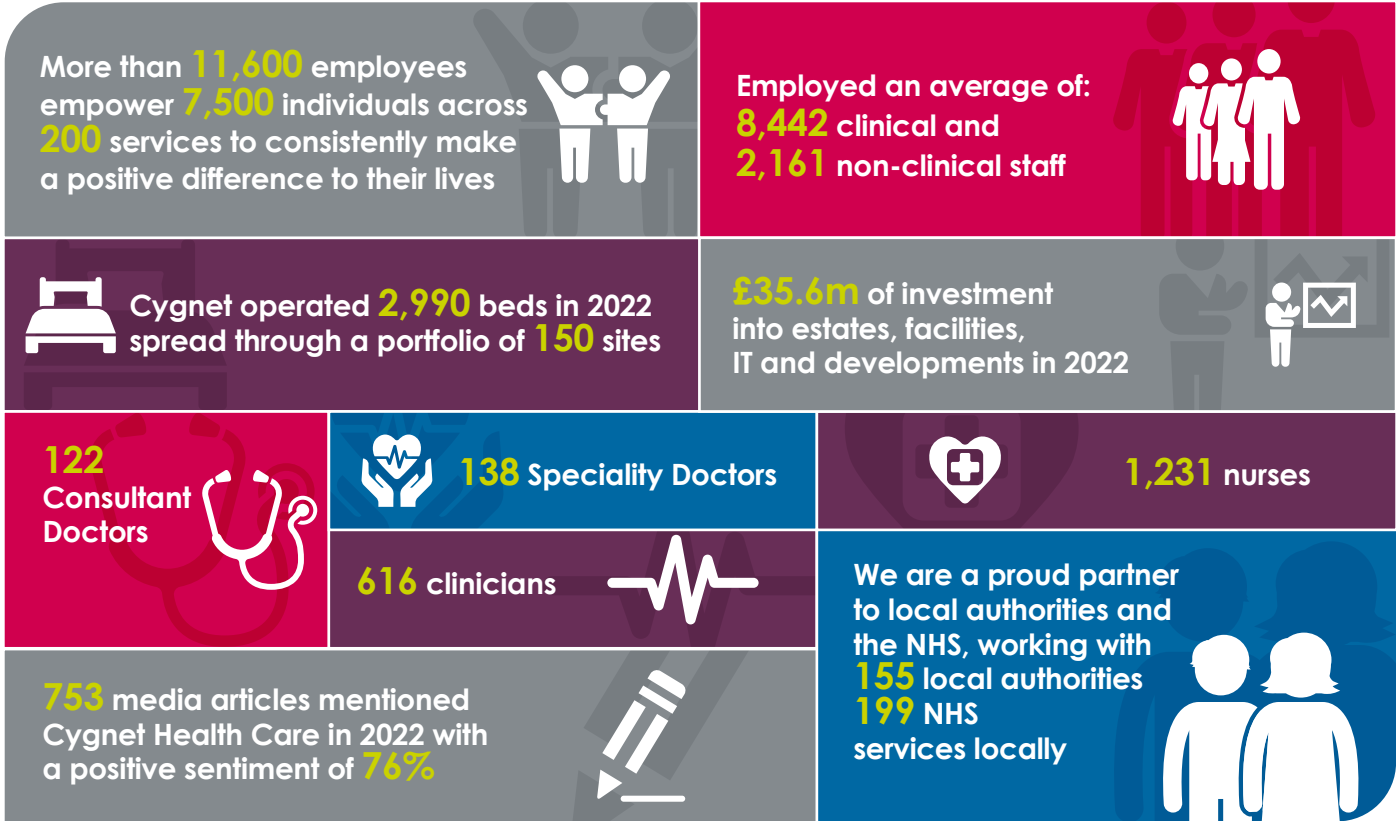
5 of our PICU services have been accredited and / or are members with the Quality Network for Psychiatric Intensive Care Units (QNPICU)



16 of our secure services are members of the Quality Network for Forensic Mental Health Services (QNFMHS)



83% services rated Good or Outstanding by regulators





Our Culture

Service User Satisfaction 2022

86% of patients say they felt safe during their time within Cygnet services



86% of patients say after their stay at Cygnet they feel better and feel they had improved



76% of patients say they would recommend Cygnet to a member of their friends or family

84% of patients say their overall experience of Cygnet service was very good or good



Feedback from Carers, Family & Friends 2022



84% of carers, families & friends say they were satisfied by being identified as the relevant person with an important caring role

89% of carers, families and friends say they were satisfied that staff are polite and approachable when they phoned or visit



83% of carers, families and friends were satisfied that the services were well maintained and clean



81% of carers, families & friends say they are likely to recommend the service to others who need this type of care

Commissioner Satisfaction

87% rated Cygnet as a brand they could trust



94% felt our services were safe or very safe



93% felt our services were responsive to their needs



Staff Satisfaction

85% of staff say they enjoy working for Cygnet



86% of staff say care of service users is Cygnet's top priority



74% of our workforce would recommend Cygnet as a great place to work



86% of our workforce say they receive the training and support to deliver a better service user experience

Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU)



Freedom to Speak Up

At Cygnets, speaking up is viewed as a positive action, one that is encouraged and supported. We appointed our first dedicated Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in 2020 who established a network of Speak up Ambassadors around the organisation to embed an open culture.

The FTSU team now includes a full-time Deputy Freedom to Speak up Guardian and a network of 165 ambassadors.

The role of the FTSU Guardian is to help improve staff experience of raising concerns and speaking up, to protect service user safety and quality of care, as well as ensure the promotion of learning and improvement.

Operates independently, impartially and objectively whilst also working in partnership alongside individuals and groups throughout the organisation



Seeks guidance and where appropriate escalates matters to bodies outside of the organisation

Has open, honest conversations with leaders in Cygnets to promote change



Supports staff who speak up and agree next steps with them collaboratively

Supports the right to confidentiality wherever possible, whilst also taking concerns forward



Works closely with freedom to Speak Up Ambassadors at sites, supporting them to influence change





Learning and Development

We understand the importance of continuous learning and development. Over 1,000 staff have taken advantage of our Apprenticeship pathways in the last 5 years. Cygnet is dedicated to supporting the career development of all our staff, and Cygnet's Nursing Pathway Apprentice Programme is helping to address an industry-wide shortage of nurses, as recruitment and retention of staff remains a key concern for the sector.

We are leading the sector on the development of nurse apprenticeships, training and development opportunities to help overcome these challenges. We have:



Trained **33** Qualified Nurse Associates and **17** Newly Qualified Nurses, with another **89** currently on the Nursing pathway

Developed an **Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship Programme**, with the first staff due to start later this year



147 staff are currently taking part in Cygnet's Leadership and Management Apprenticeship Programme - with **145** already completed



143 Mental Health First Aiders trained across the group

Invested in **ADOS-2/ADI - R Training for Psychology Teams** with more courses planned this year



Implemented the Foundations of Management Programme - over **200** staff enrolled on programme



Case Investigator Training was undertaken by over **20** staff



Made a commitment to a group of Assistant Psychologists to support them through their **Qualification in Forensic Psychology training**



Makaton training was rolled out to all our staff in Social Care



Introduced **Masterclasses**, which enables staff to access **bite-sized learning**



Nurse Medical Prescribing course - **6** completed another course taking place this year

Staff Networks

At Cygnet we are committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

We are incredibly proud of our globally diverse team, all working together to help improve the lives of the people in our care every single day. We celebrate diversity because different people, with different perspectives make Cygnet a better health and social care provider.

Cygnet Women's Network

The mission of the Network is to engage and empower women, and their allies across Cygnet, enabling them to connect with and support each other in a safe and non-judgemental environment.

Over
11,600 staff,
Over
110 nationalities,
1 amazing team

LGBTQ+ Network Update

Cygnet's LGBTQ+ Network is as colourful, creative, honest and open as its members. The network aims to collaboratively promote understanding and inclusivity within the workplace. Alongside providing a safe space for all LGBTQ+ people to discuss their unique experiences and share ideas of how we can support emotional wellness at work.

Our Multicultural Network

The Network aims to enhance the experience of ethnic minority colleagues by creating an environment of openness and fairness, promoting excellence, delivering person-centred care, and ensuring opportunities for all staff to be their best.

Cygnet Disability Network (to be launched in 2023)

The network will be looking at Hidden Disability and Known Disability affecting colleagues in Cygnet, those who are caring for someone with a disability at home, and the impact of disability on your work. It will provide an opportunity to address issues about disability and the impact it has on people's work and their lives at home. We want to provide a safe forum, a place where people can raise issues of disability in a safe way, but also to celebrate positives and the achievements of people living with disability.

Carers

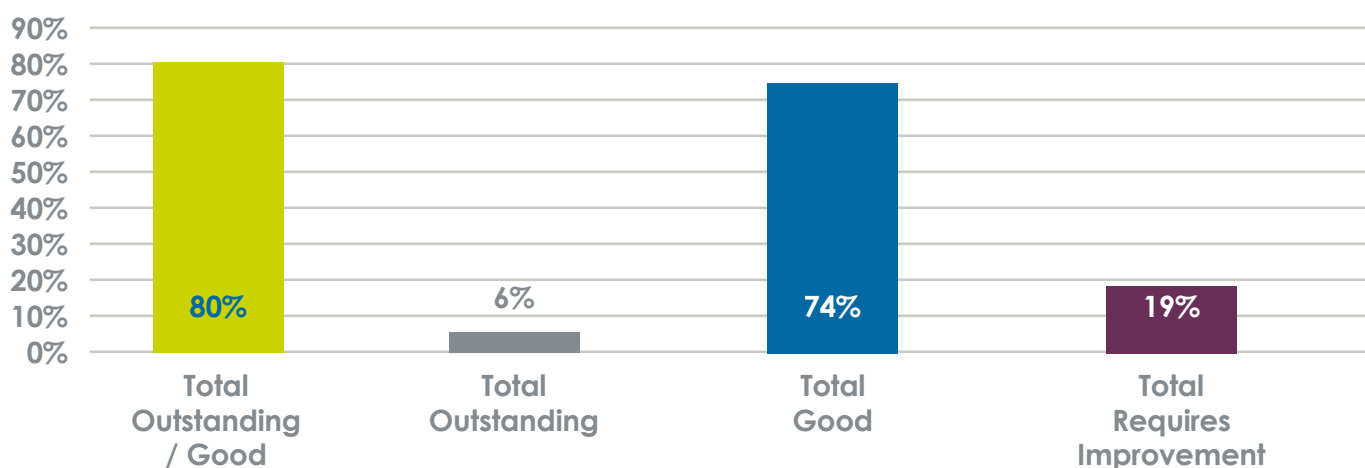
In 2022 we launched the Cygnet Carer Network, and have proudly held three Regional Carer events over this past year.

We also published our first **Carer, Family, and Friend Strategy**, co-produced with family, carers, friends, individuals who use our services and professionals. Our Carers Passport was launched, a document to support joint working with the Carer, Patient and Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) to ensure clear communication.

Our Quality

Regulatory Ratings

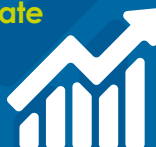
Cygnets Regulatory Ratings (Health and Social Care combined) as at December 2022



In 2022, **80%** of our services across health and social care are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by our quality regulators, outperforming the national average (as represented in the above graph)



By the time of publication for this report, this figure had risen to **83%** and we have **zero services rated inadequate**



100% of our schools in Child and Adolescent (CAMHs) facilities are rated 'Good' by **OFSTED**

In 2022 we had new services inspected. 118 services were inspected in 2021 compared to 124 services inspected in 2022. We have services that are currently rated outstanding for patient safety and in our overall regulatory ratings throughout 2022 we are encouraged that we are outperforming the national average.



Quality Improvement

Quality Improvement (QI) is vitally important to the continued success of Cygnet. Continually improving our services is a key priority for us to ensure the highest standards of care are delivered to our service users.

Since launching our Quality Improvement Programme in September 2021 great progress has been made to embed Quality Improvement within the fabric of the organisation.

Each of our services has been supported to embed a true cycle of continuous improvement through our 'QI Ready' Programme and we have had a number of successfully completed projects that have delivered sustainable improvement.



Co-Production

Co-production is at the heart of our work. Structures and projects such as the People's Council and Music 2 Empower have matured and continue to be embedded elements of the co-production culture predominant within the organisation. This has allowed us to explore new opportunities such as a culture focussed initiative on co-production, a lived experience advisory board and growing the amount of regular Experts by Experience visits taking place at services on a local level.



People's Council

The People's Council aims to share power and give a voice to service users, residents and family carers at every level of the organisation. The People's Council has been recognised as good practice by the Care Quality Commission, Royal College of Psychiatrists and NHS England.

It continues to flourish with meetings being harnessed for supporting strategic and group wide projects and initiatives in addition to the historical local co-production agenda the organisation continues to benefit from.

During a Well-Led review carried out by the Care Quality Commission on Cygnet, the review noted: "In a number of inspections of services, we found established People's Councils and evidence of improvements being made to services as a result of the work of the council. The advocacy service reported to senior leaders that the People's Council meetings established in hospitals had strengthened the service users say in how they want the units they live in to be run."

A recent report by Cygnet's independent advocacy organisation (Advent Advocacy) further noted: "The People's Council Meetings has strengthened the advocacy partnership and given service users a say in how they want the units they live in to be run. Service users have told our Advocates the meetings are not only an 'informal way of getting things done' but are also an opportunity for their family and friends to attend the unit and have their say."

The People's Council has and continues to pioneer exciting projects for the organisation including Music 2 Empower, Smoke Aware and Co-Sustain to name just a few.



Experts by Experience

Experts by Experience visits continued to grow and included general quality checking, capturing feedback, co-chairing People's Council meetings as well as supporting a variety of local and group wide initiatives.

The Experts by Experience programme also diversified the range of lived experience, now extended to young people's services, this has included regular visits and strategic input. Experts by Experience are also able to give feedback, share best practice and lessons learned directly to the Group CEO and Group Director of Nursing via the Lived Experience Advisory Board.



Recovery Oriented Practice

Music 2 Empower launched in October 2019 and aims to highlight the positive effects of music across the group.

In 2022 Music 2 Empower had a larger focus on embedding access to music locally, in addition to diversifying episodes to include young people. The Music 2 Empower project has now been able to cover nearly every service line within the organisation. Music rooms alongside access to music therapy and instruments are becoming increasingly common.



Accessible Information and Updates

The second version of Cygnet's Yellow Book was co-produced to include creative contributions of artwork, poetry and music from service users across the organisation. It is a celebration of how creativity can support positive mental health.

It is also a wellbeing resource which signposts the reader to different organisations and charities who can support wellbeing and good mental health. It includes simple practices to build healthy habits, such as mindfulness and other self-regulation practices.

The Cygnet Yellow Book is available in all Cygnet services for service users, residents, staff, families, carers and visitors to all benefit from the inspiring messages.

Service User Case Study

On Mental Health Awareness Day 2022, two service users from our North West Supported Living services spoke about overcoming their difficulties thanks to support from Cygnet.

David Raftery and Stacey Glover both receive support from Cygnet to live in the local Macclesfield community.

Stacey has been a resident for 16 months and has suffered with Bipolar since she was 12 years old. She said this is the first place that feels like home.

She said: "I have lived at different facilities but this is the first place I truly call home. I have not had a mental health relapse since moving to my own home thanks to Cygnet and the staff team have really supported me."

"The staff really care for you and at the same time help you live independently. I am feeling really positive about my future now thanks to the team here. I don't feel I struggle with my mental health anymore, I'm living a normal life and that makes me really happy."

For David, before he received support from Cygnet, he had little hope for himself.

After initially receiving rehabilitation support at Cygnet Cedars in Birmingham, he has been living independently for more than a year and volunteers once a week at a local hospice. He said that for the first time he can remember, he has hopes for a happy future.

"I've really turned a corner. I finally feel safe again. I can go out the front door and not worry about the harm which might come to me. The staff are amazing, they are all there to help. I don't trust people easily but I trust all of them here. It's just a lovely, nice place. We have all got different needs here but the staff know how to handle all of us."

I feel I am getting my confidence back and I have a smile back on my face. I wouldn't be like this now without the staff here.

A big goal for me was to get my family back. I've done that and I've regained their trust. I've got everyone behind me now.

I didn't want a life where I was constantly looking over my shoulder. I wanted a life I could feel hopeful about. I've made it, I got through the worst and I feel proud of myself. That is a gift the team at Cygnet have given me."



Our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Successes

Cygnnet is committed to making our business more environmentally and socially sustainable.

Environmental

Our aim is to achieve:

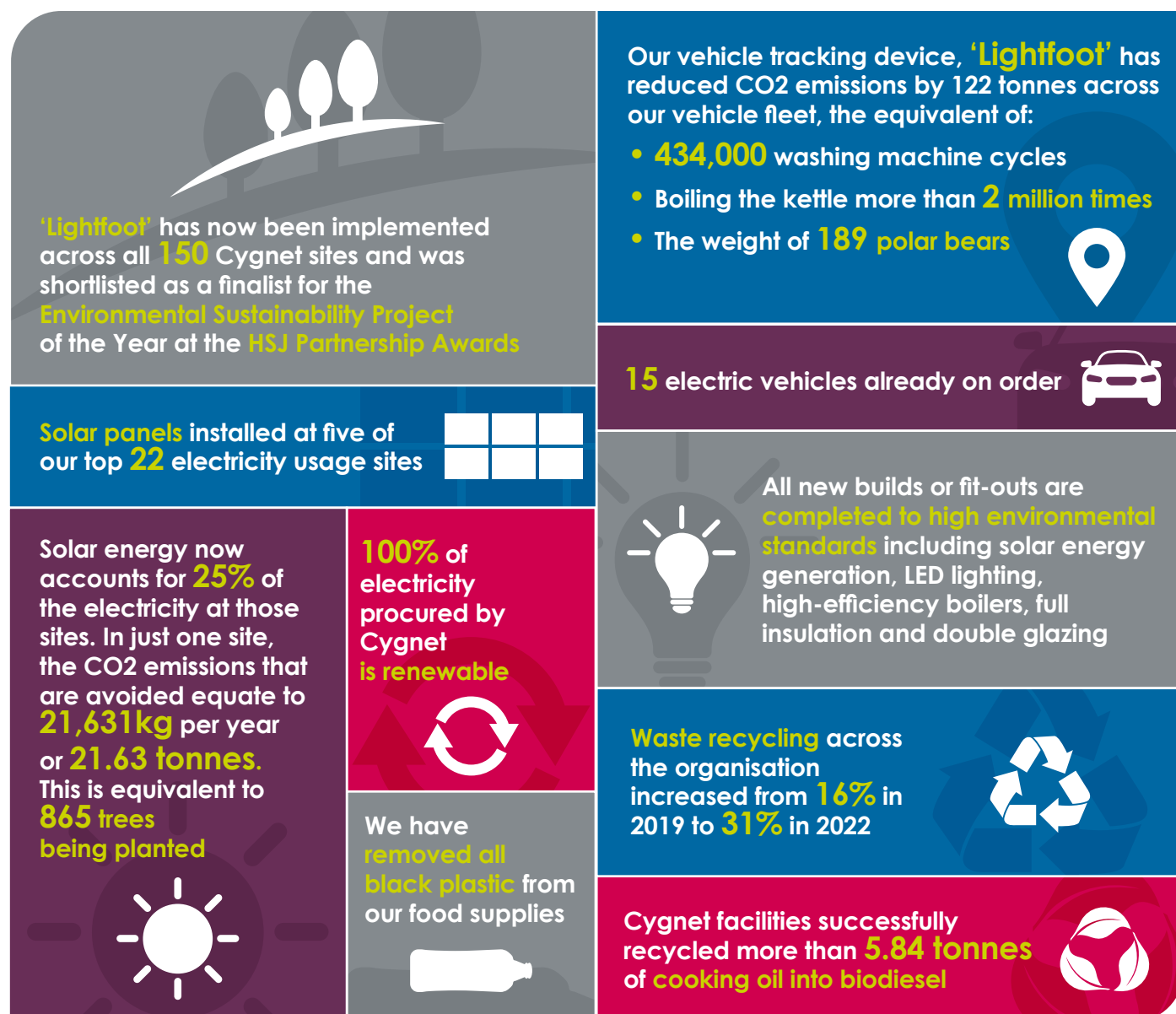


Net zero carbon for our direct and indirect emissions by 2035



Net zero carbon emissions in our supply chain by 2040

From the installation of solar panels, to the reduction of CO2 emissions across our vehicle fleet and waste management solutions at our services, we are making great strides in our environmental commitments.



Social

Cygnnet values good relationships with people in the local communities where we have services. We have more than 30-years of experience in helping and caring for people in communities across the UK and we have built strong relationships with our neighbours, we are proud to contribute meaningfully to the communities we are privileged to serve.

<p>Where possible we use local produce, resources and suppliers at our facilities to support the local economy and community infrastructure</p> 	<p>Support our staff in their local community endeavours including building relationships with local MPs, councillors, businesses, schools, charities, community groups and other services</p> 
<p>Contribute and collaborate with our local communities and are proud supporters and sponsors of numerous community initiatives, clubs and groups including Taunton FC and Bearsted FC</p> 	<p>Value our workforce through training, development, compassionate leadership and supporting individual wellbeing needs</p> 
<p>Work with our sector partners to forge strong relationships and continue to be regarded as a trusted provider of quality care</p> 	
<p>Continue to champion diversity and inclusion in our workforce</p> 	<p>Work in the spirit of co-production to put our service user's first</p> 

Governance

Cygnnet is committed to providing high quality care through a robust governance framework that is transparent, accountable and inclusive.

<p>Constantly monitor and review our services through our internal Quality Assurance, Safeguarding, Compliance and specialist teams</p> 	<p>Use data to measure our progress and assess our quality</p> 
<p>Listen to service user and staff experiences to inform our practice and strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for those in our care</p> 	<p>Operate openly and transparently with our external regulators and stakeholders to constantly improve, progress and innovate</p> 



Expert by Experience Case Study

After years of battling an eating disorder, Emily Hale is now working for Cygnet to help others also struggling with their mental health.

Emily, 23, from Maidstone, has begun working as an Occupational Therapy Assistant as well as an Expert by Experience - someone who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses health, mental health and / or social care.

In 2021, Emily was an inpatient at Cygnet Hospital Ealing following a four-year battle with anorexia. She completed a four-month treatment programme for her eating disorder and it was there that the former support worker set her sights on furthering her career post-discharge.

She said: "I saw a job advertised for an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) at Cygnet Hospital Maidstone and I instinctively felt that it would be a good fit for me.

I knew I needed a job to come out to and it would be the added motivation to keep myself well. I was still an inpatient when I had the interview and was over the moon when I heard the news that I had been successful."

Emily is now an OTA on Bearsted Ward, a 15 bed male PICU service at Cygnet Hospital Maidstone. She helps service users regain a sense of control and order in their lives, so they can move to a less restrictive care setting and ultimately return home.

"It is definitely challenging but I am absolutely loving it. It is great when you witness first-hand the positive changes happening and the difference you can make. The guys come in so unwell and within a couple of months they can have a normal conversation again. Seeing them get better and able to interact with peers and staff is really rewarding."

It is alongside this role that she fulfils her Expert by Experience responsibilities, working with female service users at Cygnet Hospital Godden Green. Speaking about this aspect of her role, Emily said it was so important to have members of staff who could empathise with what service users are going through.



Welcome to Cygnet Hospital EALING



She said: "I hope myself and other Experts by Experience can be an inspiration for our service users. It is important to give them hope for the future, and help them realise that things can and do get better.

When you are first admitted into a service, you feel like your world has turned upside down. But however stuck you feel, it's important to realise that it is only a moment in time. It is not forever. This time a year ago I was constantly being admitted to A&E because I was so unwell.

Things have turned around for me, and it can for everyone else. I want to show that to them, and prove that life doesn't have to be a cycle of mental health getting better and then worse again. There's so much more to live for."

Emily said her experience at Cygnet Hospital Ealing helped her to realise how important it is to ensure patients are treated as real people, not just as their illness.

"One of the biggest things you can give to a service user is your time," she explained. "Often they just want to talk, whether that's about their current situation or everyday things. You want to feel like a normal human being and feel connected to people."

"That's what I really want to bring to this role when I work with the women at Godden Green. Everybody's journey is different and everyone has a valuable insight into what could be done to maximise their experiences at our services. I want to sit with our service users, talk to them and really listen to what they have to say. If that helps them in any small way I will feel like I am doing a good job."

Service User Story

For over ten years Rachael experienced a number of hospital admissions and struggled with urges to self-harm and end her life. In this powerful account Rachael shares the struggles that she has had with her mental health and writes about how the team on Roseacre Ward, Cygnet Hospital Maidstone's specialised personality disorder service, supported her to learn coping strategies, engage in therapy and ultimately achieve a successful discharge.

"I grew up surrounded by abuse, mainly during my teens, I also had an event which left me with permanent trauma. From my early 20's I was in and out of hospitals for mental health related issues, firstly being diagnosed with severe depression, anxiety and an eating disorder.

It wasn't until I reached my 30's that I was diagnosed with Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD) and this was treated along with depression and anorexia in outpatients for around three years.

At the age of 34 I was readmitted to an acute ward for EUPD and depression after many attempts to end my life I was transferred to a Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and was there for seven months where I struggled to regulate my emotions and was angry all the time, getting into fights, self-harming and trying to end my life. I was extremely aggressive and frustrated at the world but internalised it all, which spilled out as self-harm. After becoming stable I was transferred to Roseacre.

When I arrived at Roseacre Ward I was still self-harming, the doctor who was treating me at the time gave me another diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which made sense because of my symptoms.

During my first eight weeks, I was placed on 1-1 care and had my medication tweaked. I had no leave as I was on a section. I found it hard to make friends to begin with and was consistently hurting myself. The multi-disciplinary team (MDT) spoke to me about what I liked doing and tried to involve me in engaging activities such as the gym and cooking.

During my time at Roseacre I had the best support. I was on 1-1 support which really helped me as I could talk openly about how I was feeling at the time, so crisis was averted.

After coming off 1-1 I was able to learn about myself. There was time to reflect by talking to caring staff who would always notice if something was wrong.

I took part in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) which helped me to learn coping strategies and these strategies made me engage in treatment more. I eventually came off a section and became an informal patient. With this I gradually gained the trust of the staff and the kitchen sessions led to a time where I could be on my own preparing meals rather than having to have staff with me. Allowing me to cook for the rest of the ward on occasion, this felt very rewarding. Even as an informal patient I was listened to by staff and I always had someone to talk to.

During my stay I engaged in trauma therapy for my earlier abuse, this helped with the flashbacks and my feelings of wanting to self-harm calmed down and I was able to talk about my trauma to my therapist without getting highly emotional. The emotion had been removed and it became a story. If I hadn't had this care and support from Roseacre I don't think I would be the woman I am today.

Today I am at university studying Mental Health Nursing and I have my own flat in supported accommodation, where I receive support twice a week. I live near my friends and family who are a great support. I am under a community mental health team who are very supportive and acknowledge my struggles, no matter how small.

I've quit smoking, I go to the gym and I've joined a choir, all to keep me grounded, as it is important to continue self-care. Don't get me wrong, some days I still have thoughts of self-harm, but I can now manage those thoughts and I can override feelings by using DBT to be more positive and therefore I don't act on anything."

"Overall if I hadn't of had that support from Roseacre Ward over those two years I wouldn't be who I am today."



Future prospects

Over the next 5 years we will:

Continue to maintain and enhance **high quality, safe services for children, young people, adults and older people**. We want all our services to deliver to the level of our absolute best and provide person-centred care

01

02

Further expand our provision of **mental health and social care services**, ensuring we continue to grow and evolve, meeting the demands and needs of service users, their families and those who commission our services. Any extension of our services will be financially sustainable, in line with national policy and supported by a clear operational framework

03

Use data intelligently to **drive improvement and foster a culture of continual learning**

04

Recognise our staff are our most important asset in the delivery of **safe, quality care** and create a culture which **promotes excellence** and provides a fulfilling place for staff to pursue their careers

05

Demonstrate how we value our workforce through training, development, compassionate leadership, recognition, and responding to their own wellbeing needs



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