



Press Release

Immediate Release

28 December 2023

Cygnet Hospital Woking Unveils New Art Gallery

A new gallery featuring artwork by service users struggling with their mental health has been unveiled at a Woking Hospital.

The Woking Gallery has been opened at Cygnet Hospital Woking, which offers a range of mental health services for men and women. The hospital, on Redding Way, is run by Cygnet Health Care and has five wards include acute wards, low secure and a female psychological intensive care unit.

Thanks to the creativity and artistic skills of the service users at the hospital, a previously blank space has been filled with vibrant drawings and paintings to add some much needed colour to the hospital walls.

Courtney Greene, Regional Lead Occupational Therapist at Cygnet Health Care explained: "We are really excited to share the transformative journey of turning a blank hospital wall into a vibrant, co-produced space.

"Collaborating with patients, art psychotherapists, activity coordinators and doctors during groups and in our recovery college, we've infused creativity into our daily practice at Cygnet Woking.

"Recognising the profound impact of art on mental health, this project emphasises the healing power of shared expression. I am so grateful for the teamwork that brought this vision to life!"

Although there was no theme to the drawings, the emphasis was on self expression and self reflection, and an art psychotherapy student was on site to run art psychotherapy individual and group sessions with service users.

Explaining the value of the project, Courtney added: "Art and the exploration of our creativity can be a powerful mindfulness tool that helps people relax and unwind, process our emotions, and manage mental health conditions such as anxiety, trauma, and depression.

"Experiences like trauma are very difficult to articulate into words, so therapies that can support and connect patients with nonverbal expression are really the foundation of the creative arts therapies.

“Painting can be used as a restorative experience, not just an enjoyable one. We can focus on using our blank canvas as an outlet to explore personal experiences and express our inner emotions that we may find challenging to speak about or put into words.

“It also allows us to realise and feel gratitude for the things that we have in our lives. Exploring elements of nature, our favourite animal or our family can help us to reconnect to those things that are most important to us and bring us joy at our most fundamental level.”

Feedback from the service users has been overwhelmingly positive, with comments such as:

‘There is no pressure in art group, I get to express myself however I choose’

‘I like being able to choose what art to do, painting, drawing or even using clay’

‘I find it difficult to talk about what’s happening in my head, but I can draw it for my doctors’

‘Art keeps me busy so I don’t think about my problems all the time’

Courtney added: “This project is particularly special as it allowed our patients to have their ‘own space’ within our hospital, and to see their finished products on display being appreciated by others which brings them a sense of accomplishment.

“Those who have chosen not to have their work displayed have benefited by just completing a piece of work in the hardest time of their lives, or have sent it to loved ones by post or email which has allowed them to feel connected.

“Engaging in these art groups has also allowed staff and patients to build therapeutic relationships in a less formal and less structured way. Having an ‘activity’ at the centre of engagement allows both parties to be more relaxed and at ease, and the value of the engagement has been beneficial for both staff and patients for the patients recovery journey.”

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Notes to Editors:

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