



Press Release

Immediate Release

5 February 2024

### **Shirebrook Care Service Teams Up with Local Charity to Reduce Food Waste**

A Shirebrook care service which supports men with learning disabilities has teamed up with a local charity to reduce food waste and provide meals to those most in need.

Cygnet Manor, on Central Drive, is part of the Cygnet Health Care division and is a 20 bed high dependency complex care service for men with learning disabilities.

BLAST – Building Lives Around Shirebrook Town – is a local Shirebrook charity which seeks to improve opportunities for all of its residents and to provide friendly and welcoming spaces for people to connect. Service users from Cygnet Manor will soon be getting involved with activities run by the charity including craft sessions and coffee mornings.

Head Chef at the Cygnet Health Care service, Natasha Starkey, has been a volunteer with BLAST for a number of years and saw an opportunity to combine food wastes from both organisations to produce microwavable meals which could be shared to those in need.

She explained: "I've been volunteering at BLAST for a few years with my family and I know they have a lot of fresh food donated from our local supermarkets.

"This is then distributed to the less fortunate and vulnerable in our local area. However I also know that what doesn't get used, has to be thrown.

"We have tried really hard at Cygnet Manor to reduce food waste and I saw an opportunity to work with the charity to make sure any potential waste was going to a good cause."

Natasha had the idea to combine any food waste from Cygnet Manor and BLAST to produce microwave meals. Not only does this prolong the shelf life of the food, but it also means the prepped meals can be frozen.

These meals are then placed in a community fridge or freezer at the charity base where people can help themselves or they can be delivered to the vulnerable and elderly that are unable to get out or struggle to cook for themselves.

BLAST are providing Natasha and her catering team with all containers and labels for her to share the use by date, cooking advice, ingredients and allergens.

She added: "Cooking is my passion and I love the idea of helping more people who are in a vulnerable position, as well as doing good for the environment.

"It feels like a win-win situation for all concerned."

Ricky Holland, Regional Operations Director for Cygnet Health Care, said he was impressed with Natasha's initiative and wanted to explore similar opportunities across the organisation's other services.

He said: "Across our Cygnet Health Care and Cygnet Social Care services, caring is in our DNA and that extends not just to our service users and their loved ones, but to the communities in which we serve.

"We are a proud partner in our communities and equally, are conscious about our environmental responsibilities. This initiative, led by Natasha, is fantastic and one I am keen to replicate as good practice so we can continue improving lives for the better."

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**Notes to Editors:**

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