



## **Press Release**

**31 May 2024**

**For Immediate Release**

### **Cygnets Hospital Kewstoke join forces with Avon and Somerset Police**

Cygnets Hospital Kewstoke joined forces with Avon and Somerset Police to host a unique event aimed at improving support for those in the local community with mental health needs.

It is the first time that an independent mental health service provider has collaborated closely with the local Avon and Somerset police force to address gaps in health support.

The event, aimed at educating law enforcement officers on how to best handle someone with mental health needs, will help ensure that people facing a mental health crisis receive the proper care, compassion and support they deserve, with the full backing of both medical professionals and law enforcement personnel.

Joshua Tapp, Hospital Manager of the Beech Road service and Dr Sai Achuthan, Medical Director, teamed up with Sergeant Matt Shafer to coordinate the event.

Dr Achuthan delivered a talk to the 20 attendees on mental health conditions in the UK and the importance of collaborative training between mental health professionals and law enforcement officers.

Attendees engaged in discussions on managing unstable personality disorder and handling instances of self-harm in public settings, as well as the best tools and advice for approaching distressed individuals with empathy and care.

The event also delved into how best to support individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and learning difficulties.

The day concluded with a commitment, from both Cygnets Hospital Kewstoke and the Avon and Somerset Police to sustain this partnership regularly.

Dr Achuthan explained: "The event was truly remarkable because of the participation and dedication shown by all the attendees.

"The engaging discussions, the willingness to learn from each other and the shared commitment, to improving health support in our community were truly inspiring.

"We are confident that this initiative will make an impact and set a standard for collaborations across the country. The success of this gathering depends on sharing knowledge and fostering connections between two services. Cygnet Hospital Kewstoke and the Avon and Somerset Police have established an environment that encourages understanding and a compassionate approach to mental health.

"This sets a path for a future where individuals receiving health support can feel supported understood and safeguarded by both healthcare professionals and law enforcement."

Sgt Shaqer added: "We had a fantastic morning learning from Cygnet Health Care's team of experienced and qualified clinicians. Policing is facing several resourcing challenges and are increasingly called upon to assist our partners in the ambulance service who are also struggling with attending calls to their service. Often, this results in Police attending mental health calls.

"Training delivered to the team by the Cygnet Health Care experts will assist us in being better able to respond to such calls by understanding the challenges faced by vulnerable people who would ordinarily be seen by the ambulance service.

"It ensures the officers can more confidently approach people in a mental health crisis and hopefully help people feel better supported. Additionally, by understanding the needs and demands on the hospital, we can better support the staff when they need our help or are victims of crime.

"We can also support the patients of the hospital when they are victims of crime by having better awareness of their conditions and how to communicate effectively. This joint working is a critical part of effective community policing."

Ends