



Press Release

Immediate Release

22 July 2024

Cygnet Transforms Clinical Space into 'Homely' Social Hub for Cedars Patients

Clinical space at a Birmingham service for men with learning disabilities has been transformed into a 'social hub' equipped with games, sensory lighting and neon signs as part of a collaboration between staff and patients.

Service users at Cygnet Cedars, a 24-bed high dependency complex care service for men with learning disabilities in Bordesley Green, now have access to a homely environment – named 'Social Hub'.

The social hub was set up away from the wards after an unused space was given a stunning makeover in an effort to provide service users with a safe space where they could relax and socialise together.

The Social Hubs have been designed and installed across more than a dozen Cygnet Health Care services so far and all have been co-produced between staff and patients, with more to come.

Working from a wish list of items provided by service users, a team of staff and Experts by Experience (those with lived experience of inpatient settings) worked together to spend a day at the Cygnet Health Care service on Broadway Avenue, transforming an otherwise empty room into a brand new space featuring games consoles, comfortable seating areas, arcade machines and sensory lighting.

The idea is that the social hubs offer a non-clinical, homely space for service users to relax and engage in fun activities and peer support sessions, giving them a safe space away from the wards.

Service users were placed at the heart of the project from the very beginning and were escorted to a local shopping centre so they could be directly involved in choosing the items that were bought for the hub, giving them a further sense of ownership of the project.

Hospital Manager Hannah Wright explained: "The patients and staff really enjoyed co-producing this room with Tom, our Expert by Experience. They had great fun and really love spending time in this room.

"The relaxed atmosphere of the social hub will foster better therapeutic relationships, allowing staff to interact with patients in a more informal and enjoyable setting.

"It has demonstrated that when service users and staff work together, they can transform built environments and create spaces that significantly enhance mental health care. The ultimate beneficiaries are the service users, who gain a place that feels invested in and reflects their needs and preferences.

"The importance of the built environment in mental health recovery cannot be overstated.

"Our social hub will promote engagement, support recovery, and foster a sense of community, making a tangible difference in the lives of those who use it."

Raf Hamaizia, Cygnet Health Care Expert by Experience Lead, added: "As someone who has been a service user and now works in mental health services, I have witnessed first-hand the profound impact that the built environment can have on mental health recovery.

"The concept of these hubs goes beyond physical spaces; it's about fostering a sense of community, engagement, and normality for both service users and staff."

The first social hub was installed at Cygnet Hospital Bierley, and its success paved the way for further installations at other Cygnet Hospitals including Churchill, Harrow, Storthfield House, Brighthouse, Woking, and many others.

Each hub typically includes items such as TVs, immersive sound systems, gaming consoles (such as PlayStations), inspirational artwork, comic figurines and posters, arcade machines, board games, bean bags, and adjustable sensory lighting.

"Shared social spaces play a crucial role in mental health hospitals by providing a sanctuary for patients to connect, heal, and rebuild their sense of community," added Raf.

"These spaces combat the isolation that many service users experience, promoting mental well-being and recovery through social interaction between different wards, genders and service lines.

"By fostering a sense of belonging and support, social hubs become vital therapeutic tools, facilitating recovery journeys and empowering individuals to reclaim their lives beyond their diagnosis."

Ends