



Press Release
Immediate Release
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Cygnet Hospital Taunton Staff Complete One Million Step Challenge

A team of health care staff and patients from a hospital in Taunton have completed the one million step challenge to highlight the importance of keeping fit and active for the benefit of our mental health.

The challenge, held as part of National Fitness Day, was for staff and patients at Cygnet Hospital Taunton to complete one million steps in 24 hours, starting at midnight on Wednesday 18 September. Steps were measured using apps such as Strava and wearing pedometers.

The challenge coincided with National Fitness Day, an annual event which aims to celebrate the fun of physical activity and encourage people of all ages and abilities to get active. The team were also fundraising for national charity Sport in Mind, an award winning mental health charity that aims to improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems through sport and physical activity.

Stu Hooper is the Active Life Lead at the hospital, on Orchard Portman, a 52-bed hospital which provides acute inpatient admissions service for men and women and a specialist inpatient service for men diagnosed with a learning disability.

He explained: "My wife and I both work in the health industry and at the end of the day, we always ask each other how many steps we've done. I know the physical effort it takes to do 25,000 steps in a day. It gave me the idea that getting the entire group of us to meet the one million target would be a good test, one that would motivate us but also push us physically, which is the point of challenges like these."

Stu explained there were multiple ways for service users as the hospital to get involved.

Patients who needed to remain on the ward were offered pedometers so they could feel a part of the day and were given a safe route around the hospital. A 1km route was also set up on the hospital grounds and patients able to enjoy escorted leave were offered the opportunity to walk around Taunton Horse Race Course.

Stu added: "For my role I am always trying to offer my patients new, fun and innovative ways for them to access exercise."

"We've all got such lovely memories from the day and the feedback from staff and patients has been so positive. There was a real sense of camaraderie and teamwork as we tried to achieve the challenge we set out for ourselves."

"One of our patients managed 21,000 steps and this was an incredible achievement for him.

"It was a great effort from all who took part."

Explaining the motivation behind the challenge, Stu said: "We wanted to raise awareness for mental health and the charity Sport in Mind. We know how important being physically well is for our mental health and this value is supported wholeheartedly by Sport in Mind.

"It was also a means to engage patients and staff in something different. It was a good way of being active without the need for any equipment.

"We wanted to do this as a hospital community, and give people a motivation for doing exercise and having conversations with one another."

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