



Press Release  
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### **'I've found my true passion' – My Apprenticeship Journey**

A 24-year-old mother from Maidstone has spoken about how apprenticeships are helping her find her true passion after she disliked school and found herself being a young carer to her mum.

This week it is National Apprenticeship Week 2025, which aims to highlight the exceptional work being done by apprentices and employers across the UK.

Tina Stevens is the Quality and Safety Lead at Cygnet Hospital Maidstone. The 24-year-old mother of one-year-old Willow balanced her work and family commitments around gaining new skills and qualifications to help her develop her career.

"I started working for Cygnet nearly six years ago," she explained. "At the time I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do as a career. I applied for a job and I started working on the female personality disorder ward as a Support Worker.

"I then began working as the Occupational Therapy Assistant and I realised that pathway wasn't really for me, so I returned to being a Support Worker.

"I spent a bit of time on the male PICU [Psychiatric Intensive Care] ward as a Support Worker and progressed into the role as the Referrals and Compliance Coordinator. That's where I found my passion and I really wanted to progress my role."

Tina was a young carer for her mum who suffers with multiple sclerosis which she said inspired her career in health care.

"As I've always cared, it's always been my thing, but I had quite a lot of passion more for mental health rather than physical health," she said.

"I found a true passion for this sector."

Cygnet Health Care offers a range of apprenticeship opportunities for its 13,000 staff and Tina is currently finalising her Team Leader Level 3 Apprenticeship.

"About two years ago, when I was the Referrals and Compliance Coordinator, my hospital manager suggested I look into doing an Apprenticeship because I really wanted to progress my role," she explained. "It's actually a really easy on-the-job way to progress your career and your personal development.

"After my maternity leave I really wanted to come back to work and get a bit of "me" back as well as being a mum, so I returned after seven months off and restarted my Apprenticeship.

"Picking it up again was a bit scary, but I've really, really enjoyed it and I found a true passion. When I was younger I didn't like education, I didn't like school, and I didn't really like college, so I'd dreaded doing the Apprenticeship.

"But when I started it, I was really supported by my working team here, my manager, the Cygnet Apprenticeship Team and the university that we're doing it with."

Whilst finalising her Level 3, Tina has applied to do a Level 5 Operations Apprenticeship and said she plans to do as many as she can.

"I just want to keep learning and developing my career," she said.

"An apprenticeship is something that you put into practice on the job you're already doing. It's just about focusing on the work you do and being able to continue to develop and advance your skills.

"Doing an Apprenticeship is only going to positively impact you, there's no negative impact to doing an Apprenticeship, and that's what I really shout loudly at people.

"My family are really proud of me because I started off a little bit unsure on what I wanted to do, a little bit hopeless in a way, and they weren't sure where I was going. Now I can clearly tell them exactly what pathway I want.

"I enjoy my job, I enjoy my Apprenticeship, and I think that's really good for them to see that I'm doing something that I really, really enjoy, and they're really proud of that.

"As a working mum it's amazing. To be able to go home, be a mum and then to be able to come to work full time, do something I really enjoy, you can't really ask for more."

Tina gave a message to anyone considering an Apprenticeship. She said: "It's really not that scary and it is only going to have a positive impact on your future. It's nothing like school. You're independent, you're doing it in your job role, you have a good support system around you, and the people that are doing it with you only want the best for you.

"It's just advancing on what you enjoy doing in your job already and you're just giving yourself opportunities, so you're only going to enjoy it."

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