



Press Release

Immediate Release

19 March 2025

### **'Cygnet Maple House has been a game-changer'**

*Kerry Bristow has been a patient at Cygnet Maple House since November 2023. The service, on Kneeton Road, East Bridgford, is part of the Cygnet Health Care division and is a 16 bed highly specialised service providing assessment, treatment and rehabilitation for women with personality disorder and complex needs.*

*Described as "kind, compassionate and supportive" by Cygnet Health Care staff, Kerry has spent the last 11 years sectioned under the Mental Health Act. She has now taken a significant step forward in her mental health journey and is keen to share her experiences to help others.*

I had quite a difficult childhood. I was bullied at school and at home I felt confused about boundaries. I was smoking and drinking alcohol at the age of 13, I thought that's just what people did.

I was bullied for so long and it changed my mindset. I started to get aggressive and would always get punished for 'bad behaviour' until I couldn't stay in school. I was moved out of mainstream education and transferred to a specialist school for children with mental health needs. I also went into care and it was awful being taken from my home.

I was just 8 years old when I remember self-harming for the first time. I did it to cope with how I felt and escape what was going on. After this, I was in and out of CAMHS and moved to an adult ward when I was 17. I was so scared that I ran away and was moved to a PICU. I felt like I was just passed from one service to another and had been given up on.

When I was sectioned in 2014, one doctor told me I would probably never get better. It really affected me.

When I moved to Cygnet Maple House, I was really difficult. I got scared when things would start to go well that people would just wash their hands of me, so I would do something to ruin it. It was self-destructive behaviour.

Whenever I tried to set myself back, the team would speak to me and I would realise 'these guys are behind me and they are helping me'. They gave me chances that no one else had. For the first time I felt like I wasn't given up on, what a difference it has made.

In the past if there was an incident, I felt that I was punished. Here, I don't feel that way. Staff don't get angry and they don't hold anything against you. My psychologist helps everything to make sense. Now things fall into place and I understand why I am the way that I am.

I have opportunities here that I never thought I'd get. I have been to university to present to students and have also been invited to do a presentation to the local ICB safeguarding board this year.

My proudest moment happened this month, I was made an informal patient. This means that for the first time in 11 years I am no longer detained under the Mental Health Act. It was amazing. I walked into the office and said 'I've done it!' and everyone hugged me. I looked around the room and could feel how happy everyone was for me, I thought 'these guys are actually really proud of me.' I didn't think I'd ever get to this point.

I am so passionate about telling people how important places like Cygnet Maple House are. For me, it has been a game-changer and changed my life. If there were more places like this with support and therapy from people who understand personality disorders, then more people would be able to get better.

My next goal is to step down, which feels in reach now, but I'd really like to make a difference to the whole system. I have written to my local MP and would love to go and speak in parliament one day! I would also like to write a self-help book with advice for people coming into hospital.

My advice to others who are struggling is don't lose hope. You've got to hang in there. I always say to the other girls here, if the sun isn't shining you just have to dance in the rain.

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