



Press Release

Immediate Release

17 June 2025

**Finding My Independence: My Journey from Dene Brook to Cygnet Supported Living in Leeds**

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*I'm a strong, independent woman, and I want to share my journey with you this Learning Disabilities Week - because it's a story about growth, strength, and discovering what I'm really capable of.*

*This year, the theme of Learning Disabilities Week is "Do You See Me?" and I love that. Because it's not just about being looked at, it's about being seen. Seen for our talents, our dreams, our voices, our potential. I want people to see me as a capable woman who has so much to offer. I want people to hear my voice and understand that having a learning disability doesn't mean I can't achieve great things. It just means I might do them differently, and that's okay. What matters is that I feel valued, respected, and included. And right now, I really do, thanks to my experiences at Cygnet Social Care services.*

For nearly eight years, Dene Brook in Rotherham was my home. It wasn't just a place to live, it was where I learned how to live.

At Dene Brook, I learned how to clean and cook for myself, how to understand my emotions, and how to cope when things didn't go quite right. The team were always patient, kind and caring. They helped me build confidence, form friendships in a way that works for me, and taught me the skills I needed to be ready for the next step.

Without Dene Brook, I honestly don't think I'd be where I am today. I had good times and bad times, but they helped me through them all. They were my team and they believed in me when I didn't always believe in myself.

But after a while, I started to realise that something was missing.

Even though I was learning a lot, I wasn't going out much. I wasn't part of any groups in the community. I didn't manage my own money or medication. And deep down, I wanted one big thing more than anything else - independence.

So, I decided I was ready for supported living and with the support of the Cygnet Social Care team, I was moved to Cygnet Supporting Living Service in Leeds.

I was excited but I was also really emotional. Saying goodbye to Dene Brook was hard. They gave me a lovely send-off with a leaving party and lots of well wishes. It meant so much to me.

At Cygnet Supported Living in Leeds, I had a fresh start. I used all the skills and confidence I'd built to get to know my new support team. I decorated my flat just how I wanted it, and I made a promise to myself, to grab this new chance with both hands.

Now? I go out every single day!

I go bowling, swimming, shopping, out for meals, to the cinema, the beach, spa days, theme parks, and I've even started planning a holiday abroad!

I've also got two jobs. I work as a gardener at Kirkside House, another Cygnet Social Care service, and as an administrator here at my supported living service. I'm looking into a volunteer job at Primark. I love staying busy and having goals to work towards.

Every week, I go to a group called Developing You, run by Pyramid and People Matters. There, I get help from a 1:1 employment advisor to build my CV, learn digital skills, and get ready for more job opportunities. I've met loads of new people and found a great support network.

One of the things I'm most proud of is how much I've increased my independence. I've reduced my staff hours and spend more time living my life on my own terms. Most evenings, I'll cook myself some supper, put my feet up, and enjoy some well-earned me time!

I've learned so many new things, like:

- Doing my own medication
- Managing my own money
- Learning bus routes so I can travel freely
- Planning my meals and trying new recipes
- Understanding my emotions and building confidence
- Even doing Makaton training!

And I'm not done yet.

I'm now working on becoming fully independent with my medication, getting a pet (fingers crossed!), going out on my own and managing and counting up my spending. I want to start a college course, get a qualification and go on that holiday I've been dreaming about. Every day, I'm setting new goals and smashing them.

Living in supported living has helped me find my happy place. I've found a space where I'm supported, but also challenged to grow and thrive. I've got people around me who believe in me, and I believe in myself, too.

So to Dene Brook, thank you for giving me the best start. And to Cygnet Supported Living in Leeds, thank you for helping me fly.

I'm proud of everything I've achieved. And I want everyone to know, having a learning disability doesn't stop you from being strong, independent, and successful.

Because if I can do it, so can you.