



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Mansfield Resident Shortlisted for Award After Overcoming Personal Challenge

A Mansfield resident who lives with a learning disability and autism has been named a finalist in the 2025 National Lived Experience Awards after inspiring others when he achieved his hopes and dreams by overcoming a significant personal challenge.

The awards, organised by leading health and social care company, Cygnet Group, celebrate service user-led initiatives in mental health, learning disability, and autism services across the UK.

Cygnet Social Care has enabled 25-year-old Kieran, a resident at Cherry Tree House in Mansfield, take his very first flight and enjoy a sun-soaked week on Spain's Costa del Sol, an experience once thought out of reach. This achievement has seen him be shortlisted in the Social Care Star category of the awards.

Kieran, who lives with moderate learning disabilities and autism and is non-verbal, has a huge love of sunshine, water and exploring new places. Having never experienced a holiday abroad before, staff at the service were determined to make his dream come true.

His mum Lisa explained: "I was brought up in a family that having an open mind and also broadening the mind, is the way forward and wherever possible a holiday is part of that education and making your world bigger and brighter.

"I wanted that for Kieran I knew that with Cherry Tree House's positive determined ethos this could be made a reality."

Kieran thrives on routine and can find long periods of waiting extremely stressful. Yet, with meticulous planning and creative problem-solving, the Cherry Tree House team, working closely with Kieran's mum, Lisa, and partners at East Midlands Airport and TUI, removed the typical travel hurdles.

To support Kieran and reduce anxiety around travel, the team put a range of tailored strategies in place. These included fast-track airport routes and the use of a sunflower lanyard to discreetly signal Kieran's additional needs. In the weeks leading up to the trip, staff carried out several familiarisation visits to the airport – including a full 3 a.m. trial run – to help Kieran become comfortable with the environment.

They also created personalised social-story guides to explain each stage of the journey in a format he could understand. On the day of travel, comfort items such as his favourite electronic devices and a familiar inflatable bean-bag chair were brought along to help Kieran feel safe and relaxed.

Despite an unexpected two-hour baggage delay in Málaga, Kieran calmly queued with his iPod, an achievement staff describe as “nothing short of transformational.”

“This trip made Kieran’s world bigger and brighter,” said his mum, Lisa. “It proved he can cope in totally new environments when the right support is in place. I’ve never felt so proud of my son, or the Cherry Tree House team.”

Senior Support Worker Lloyd added: “After 17 years in care, I can honestly say watching Kieran swim in the open sea and explore Marbella was one of my proudest moments. The experience has boosted his confidence, tolerance for waiting and overall happiness. We’re already planning the next adventure.”

Home manager Sophie Hill added: “I don’t think we can explain in words the positive impact which this holiday had on Kieran; he achieved things we never thought possible; and since returning home his confidence has grown and his new found skill for waiting has been so evident.”

The winners will be announced during an exclusive ceremony on 23 September at Colwick Hall, Nottingham, where service users from across the country will gather for an evening themed “Bridgerton and Rainbows”, as chosen by the lived experience events team.

The National Lived Experience Awards began in 2013, inspired by service users at Cygnet Hospital Derby who wanted to recognise the achievements of their peers. Since then, the event has grown into an annual celebration hosted at venues such as Silverstone Circuit, Old Trafford, and Pride Park.

This year’s event is supported by headline sponsor Ciela Costa, with additional sponsorship from Sustainable Advantage, Central Computers, Delaware, Cyber One, Audience Link, Blue Leaf, and U Energy Group.