



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Triple Success for Cygnet Oaklands at the Great British Care Awards

Cygnet Oaklands in Hexham is celebrating after three of its team members have been named finalists in the North East Region of the Great British Care Awards 2025.

Service Manager Ashleigh Yilmaz, Maintenance Manager Neil Young, and Support Worker Mercy Igbaroola have each been shortlisted for awards recognising their dedication, compassion and commitment to delivering outstanding care and support for individuals with learning disabilities and complex needs.

The Great British Care Awards celebrate excellence across the care sector, honouring individuals and teams who go above and beyond to provide high-quality, person-centred care.

Ashleigh, who joined Oaklands in 2022, has been shortlisted in the Care Home Registered Manager category. The award recognises managers who demonstrate exceptional leadership, expertise and vision in delivering person-centred care.

Ashleigh began her career in 2014 after completing a degree in Adult Nursing. She went on to work as a specialist trauma and intensive care nurse, before gaining experience across older adult care, acute mental health and learning disability settings.

After a period teaching English abroad, Ashleigh returned to the UK and joined Cygnet Oaklands, progressing from registered nurse to service manager. She is passionate about improving the quality of nursing and support within the social care sector.

Maintenance Manager Neil Young has been shortlisted in the Putting People First category, which celebrates individuals or teams who empower people to take greater control over their care. Neil's nomination highlights his person-centred approach to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming environment where residents' independence and individuality are prioritised.

Support Worker Mercy Igbaroola has been named a finalist in the Ancillary Worker and Dignity in Care category. This award honours those who excel in promoting dignity, respect and independence, ensuring that every individual is treated with

compassion and understanding. Mercy is recognised for her ability to foster inclusion, protect privacy and inspire colleagues through her exemplary approach to care.

Service Manager Ashleigh Yilmaz said: "I'm absolutely delighted to be shortlisted and really proud to see Neil and Mercy recognised for their incredible work. These nominations reflect the dedication and passion that runs through the whole Oaklands team.

"Neil and Mercy both embody what great care is all about – putting people first, treating everyone with dignity, and making a real difference in the lives of those we support. To have our team's efforts recognised at this level is a huge honour and something we're all very proud of.

"On a personal level, I'm really shocked and humbled to have been nominated, it makes a lot of the hard work worth it."

Mercy added: "Being nominated is a true honour and a personal milestone. Dignity has always been central to my approach to care, recognising each person's humanity, respecting their choices, and ensuring they feel valued, heard, and safe.

"This nomination reflects the compassion, patience, and respect I strive to bring to every interaction. To me, care is about restoring confidence, preserving independence, and showing kindness when it's most needed.

"Being recognised among such inspiring individuals who share this commitment is deeply humbling. It reminds me that small acts of dignity, a smile, a word of reassurance, a moment spent truly listening, can help build a culture of respect and compassion.

"This nomination reaffirms my dedication to championing dignity in care and to ensuring that every person I support feels seen, respected, and valued."

Cygnets Oaklands, based on Anick Road in Hexham, is part of the Cygnets Social Care division. The service provides specialist residential support with nursing for adults with learning disabilities and complex needs, helping each individual to achieve greater independence and quality of life.

The North East regional winners of the Great British Care Awards will be announced at a gala evening later this year.