



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Cygnet St Williams rated Outstanding for Well-Led by CQC

Cygnet St Williams has been praised by patients, carers and inspectors for its kindness, compassion and life-changing care after being rated Outstanding for Well-Led following a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection.

During an inspection by the regulator in November 2025, Cygnet St Williams, a 12-bed neuropsychiatric hospital in Darlington, was rated Good overall. The CQC highlighted the quality of care, strong leadership and positive culture within the service, alongside excellent feedback from patients and carers.

Praising the staff, inspectors said: "Staff were described as kind and respectful. Carers highlighted that staff provided excellent care, paid attention to detail and they had noted significant improvement in their loved one's presentation."

During the inspection, inspectors observed staff interactions with patients and noted: "Staff attitudes and behaviours showed that they were discreet, respectful and responsive, providing patients with help, emotional support and advice at the time they needed it."

As part of the inspection, the regulator spoke with patients and carers who shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, including:

- "They have got to know me in-depth. Since I came here, I have been thoroughly diagnosed... it's the best thing in the world for me."
- "All the staff are brilliant."
- "I have not met a single staff who hasn't had a positive, supportive attitude."
- "When he came here I was stressed and used to visit every day. Staff said, 'you are welcome here every day.' Now I know he is in good hands."
- "We are involved in his care; it's a two-way thing."

Patients spoke positively about daily life at the service. The report read: "Patients told us they had access to activities every day, including swimming, fishing, gardening, and trips to the seaside. Staff encouraged patients to maintain contact with friends and their family."

Leadership and culture were key reasons for the Outstanding Well-Led rating. The CQC concluded: "Service leadership was exceptional and distinctive. Leaders and the service culture they created drove and improved high-quality, person-centred care."

"The service was exceptional at fostering a positive culture where people knew they could speak up and their voice would be heard."

The report also recognised how staff achievements were celebrated and morale was monitored, alongside strong opportunities for patient education, employment and volunteering.

The effectiveness of staffing and teamwork was praised throughout the report. The CQC said: "The service made sure there were enough qualified, skilled and experienced staff, who received effective support, supervision and development. They worked together well to provide safe care that met people's individual needs."

"The service was exceptional at treating people with kindness, empathy and compassion and in how they respected people's privacy and dignity."

Care planning was described as person-centred and recovery-focused. Inspectors found: "Care plans were personalised, holistic and recovery-oriented. We saw evidence that the patient and, where applicable, their loved ones, were involved in decisions about care and treatment."

The CQC praised how the service supported independence and wellbeing, stating: "The service always supported people to manage their health and wellbeing to fully maximise their independence, choice and control."

"Ward activities helped promote a healthy lifestyle for patients. Staff encouraged patients to participate in walking groups, sports activities and cooking healthy meals."

The report highlighted the wide range of meaningful activities available to patients: "Staff gave patients access to activities, such as board games, quizzes, music events, horse therapy, visiting a local reptile shop, swimming, and visits to train museums and seaside resorts."

Manager Alison King said she was delighted with the outcome. She said: "This inspection outcome reflects Cygnet St Williams' continued commitment to delivering safe, compassionate and person-centred care underpinned by strong leadership and a positive, inclusive culture."

"We are incredibly proud of this report and of the Outstanding rating for Well-Led."

“It is particularly meaningful to see such positive feedback directly from patients and carers, recognising the kindness of our teams, the personalised care people receive and the real progress patients are making in their recovery.

“We are committed to creating a safe, respectful and empowering environment where people feel listened to, supported and encouraged to achieve their goals, and this report is a testament to the strong culture we have built together.”

The CQC also found that safety was a key strength of the service and inspectors reported that all areas of the service were safe, clean, well equipped, well furnished, well maintained and fit for purpose. The regulator also highlighted that the service used systems and processes to safely prescribe, administer, record and store medicines and that patient safety incidents were well managed.