



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Cygnet Hospital Colchester Staff Described as “Gifts from God” in Latest CQC Report

Cygnet Hospital Colchester has been praised for its Outstanding caring nature by the Care Quality Commission after a family member described the staff at the hospital as “gifts from God”.

The 59 bed hospital provides a range of intensive support and rehabilitation services for men with learning disabilities, autism or mental health needs. The service, on Boxted Road, has been rated Good overall by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with an Outstanding rating for Caring, following its latest inspection.

The inspection, which took place in December across the hospital's acute wards, long stay and rehabilitation wards, and learning disability and autism wards, found the hospital to be providing high-quality, compassionate and person-centred care.

As part of the inspection, the regulator spoke with patients and families, with one relative telling inspectors: “They are not giving up on my son...this place and the people working here are like gifts from God to us.”

The CQC rated the hospital Good across the Safe, Effective, Responsive and Well-led domains, with inspectors highlighting the exceptional kindness and compassion shown by staff throughout the service.

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

“We observed cheerful staff interacting positively with patients and providing them with practical help, encouragement and emotional support. Staff supported patients to understand and manage their care and treatment by using different methods of communication considering their individual needs, including their personal, cultural, social and religious needs.

“Staff developed therapeutic relationships with patients based on trust, compassion, and understanding.

“We spoke with five patients at the service. They all told us staff were happy, kind, good, ‘brilliant’ and treated them well.”

Inspectors also noted that staff supported patients to have a meaningful life by accessing services and activities important to them. This included healthcare services within the community, and activities such as drama classes, visiting local shops, attending college and the social hub and leisure centre.

Patients, families and commissioners shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about their experiences.

Inspectors noted: "All the patients we spoke with told us they were happy at the hospital, staff helped them, and they felt safe." One patient described staff as "brilliant" and said they had learned new strategies to help them move forward, while another explained: "I get on well with staff who talk slowly so I can understand them." Families told inspectors their loved ones were safe and well cared for, with two relatives saying the hospital was the best service they had experienced and describing it as "exceptional in every way".

One commissioner feedback that "this is the best that he has ever seen his patient since he had known him and that he could see how well everyone has worked with him."

Across the acute wards, inspectors found that "patients were cared for in safe, well-maintained environments by skilled and experienced staff who worked together effectively to deliver personalised care."

Care plans were comprehensive, recovery-focused and tailored to meet both mental and physical health needs, with treatment plans clearly setting out patients' goals. A commissioner offered particularly strong praise for Highwoods ward, describing it as "the best Cygnet ward they had ever worked with."

"They praised their collaboration, communication and information sharing and noted they were proven to be patient centred, intuitive and supportive," inspectors said.

Inspectors also highlighted the wide range of therapies and activities available, including mindfulness sessions, psychology drop-ins, social skills groups, occupational therapy and activities promoting healthy lifestyles such as walking groups and sports.

The CQC also recognised the hospital's commitment to staff development and wellbeing, noting that managers supported staff to build their skills and progress their careers, including examples of support workers being supported to become fully qualified nurses. Staff spoke positively about development opportunities and said they felt valued, supported and proud to work at the hospital.

Inspectors noted: "The service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created promoted high-quality, person-centred care." Staff described leaders as approachable and supportive, with good morale across teams and a strong sense of shared purpose.

“Staff felt positive and proud about working for the provider and their team. Staff we spoke with took joy from building relationships with patients, getting to know them and seeing their recovery.

“They praised Cygnet as an employer and felt valued as a member of the team. Staff had good morale and told us they enjoyed working at the hospital and that they received good support from colleagues and managers.”

Within long-stay and rehabilitation services, patients said they felt safe, involved and listened to, with ward rounds described as helpful and supportive. Carers told inspectors the hospital was “a nice, clean, tidy, welcoming environment” and said they were supported to maintain regular contact with relatives, including visits home where appropriate. Inspectors highlighted the hospital's focus on recovery and wellbeing, including access to a gym and full-time personal trainer, as well as partnerships with local organisations that enabled patients to take part in community activities such as yoga, football and leisure centre sessions.

Patients also had access to a wide range of therapeutic and recreational activities including shopping, cooking, music, arts, cycling and life skills, with many saying they enjoyed the gym and the variety of opportunities available.

The learning disability and autism wards were praised for the use of tailored communication methods, including easy-read materials, pictorial aids and social stories, to ensure patients could understand and engage with their care.

Praising the “exceptional standard of care” on the wards, the CQC said: “Staff treated people as individuals and were highly motivated to ensure people's care, support and treatment met people's individual needs and preferences.

“Staff took account of individuals' communication preferences and needs, ensuring that patients could understand and engage with their care planning.”

Inspectors found that patients were supported to live meaningful lives, with opportunities to attend community groups, college courses, drama sessions and local activities.

Lynn McGhee, Hospital Manager, said: “We are incredibly proud of the outcome of this report, in particular hearing some of the feedback from patients, their loved ones and commissioners.

“Every day, the staff here at Cygnet Hospital Colchester demonstrate compassion, dedication, professionalism and a commitment to putting our patients at the heart of everything we do. The recognition of the kindness and person-centred support we provide means a great deal to us.

“Our entire hospital team continuously focuses on creating a safe, supportive and therapeutic environment where people feel valued, respected and empowered on their recovery journey. We will continue to build on this success and ensure we deliver the highest possible standards of care for everyone we support.”